

HARDING *of* ST. TIMOTHY'S



ARTHUR STANWORTH PIER

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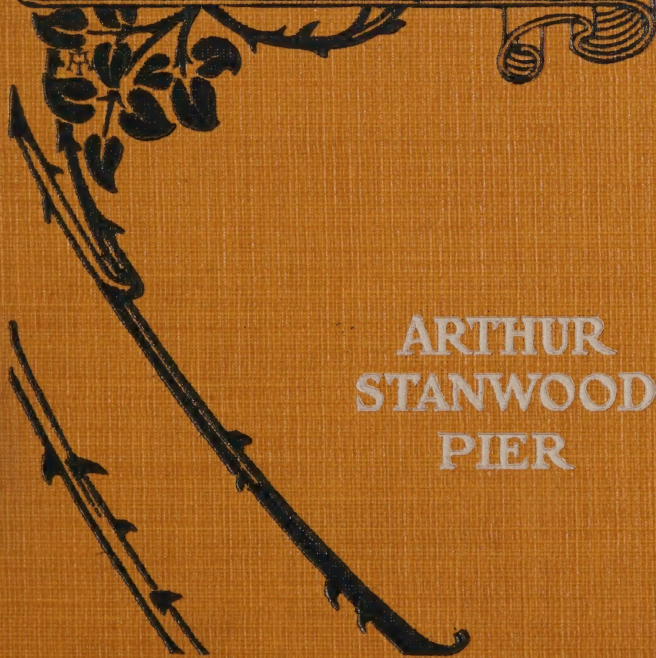
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HARDING of
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ARTHUR
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THERE WAS A PLEASANT TWINKLE IN HIS EYES

HARDING OF ST. TIMOTHY'S

BY

ARTHUR STANWOOD PIER

AUTHOR OF

"BOYS OF ST. TIMOTHY'S," "THE ANCIENT GRUDGE,"
ETC.



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

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Published September 1906

PRINTED IN THE U . S . A

Acknowledgment is made to *The Youth's Companion*, in which this story first appeared, under the title, "Harry Harding's Last Year."

HARDING OF ST. TIMOTHY'S

CHAPTER I

THE master in charge of the great silent schoolroom touched a bell. Instantly the silence was broken with a variety of sounds. There was an outburst of confused speech, a scraping of chairs and feet on the wooden floor, a slamming together of books, and a banging of desk-lids. For the touching of the bell signified that the last study hour of this September afternoon was ended.

The boys issuing from the brick building divided into two streams, which turned to right and left, moving up or down the maple-shaded road toward the two big dormitories of St. Timothy's School. Some of the boys were frolicking, chasing one another, playing leap-frog as they went, out in the middle of the road ; but most of them moved languidly along the sidewalk in groups of three and

four. It had been a half holiday ; they had been playing hard all the afternoon, except for this one study hour, and were tired.

Harry Harding and Rupert Ormsby were the last to leave the study building and stroll toward the Upper School. Harry's movements were especially indolent.

"What's your hurry, Rupe?" he said. "We have plenty of time."

"Yes," said the bigger boy, as he slackened his pace. "I suppose I won't get supper any sooner for hurrying, but I'm awfully hungry."

"That's what comes of being such an all-round athlete," Harry rejoined, and then he added wistfully, "Do you think I'll ever be able to do *anything* in athletics, Rupe?"

"Oh, I should n't wonder. You showed up pretty well in the football practice to-day. If you were n't so light. But you can run — and I guess you have plenty of sand." He smiled at Harry cheerfully, but Harry seemed to be in gloom.

"When you're in the sixth form," he said, "and sort of prominent because you once had

a brother here that everybody knows about, you wish sometimes you could amount to something yourself."

"What's the matter?" asked Rupert. "You're head editor of the 'Mirror' and vice-president of the Pen and Ink, and generally a great gun. What more do you want?"

"Oh, it isn't that sort of thing that counts," replied Harry. "It's athletics. I'd give anything to be the sort of all-round fellow my brother Clark was—the sort you are."

"Ho! brains beat muscle any day."

"There's one thing," Harry continued, "that I am glad of, and that is that it's you who are the big all-round athlete. You'll be president of the athletic association and captain of the crew, and everything else. And I'm mighty glad of it!"

"Thanks!" Rupert laughed. "Only I'm afraid your congratulations are premature."

"Oh, no! You're the only real athlete in the whole sixth form. There are two or three pretty good in the fifth,—like Sam Hall

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and Nat Dennison, — but they won't count till next year. By the way, Rupert," — he spoke with a sudden embarrassment, as if he hardly knew how to approach the subject, — "I wanted to tell you, — I hope you'll be glad to know, — you've been taken into the Crown."

Rupert stopped and leaned against the fence. They were only a hundred yards from the Upper School. Boys were sitting on the steps of the big brick building or standing about on the grass-plot in front, waiting for the supper-bell.

"I'm sorry," Rupert said. "I'll have to decline it, Harry."

"Why?" There was blank disappointment on Harry's face.

"I don't stand for the Crown." Still leaning against the fence, Rupert reached out, grasped Harry's shoulders, and shoved him back and forth, gently, affectionately.

"Why not?" There was resentful surprise now in Harry's tone.

"Because," said Rupert, releasing him,

“it’s a clique, and there ought not to be any clique in a school like this. You fellows in the Crown think that you’re the aristocracy; you flock by yourselves and manage things so that you run the school. I’m not saying you don’t run it pretty well, but I object to the system.”

“The fellows in the Crown are your friends—the fellows you know and like best—the best fellows in the school,” pleaded Harry. “I should think you’d like to join them.”

“There!” exclaimed Rupert. “Just as if a fellow outside of your society can’t be an intimate friend of fellows in it! That’s just what I object to.”

“No, I don’t mean that. I don’t think it’s true.”

“Besides,” continued Rupert, “I’m not so sure that you have the best fellows in the Crown. I don’t believe Joe Herrick’s a very good sort of fellow.”

“Herrick’s improved a lot since he’s been a member,” declared Harry, “and we want to

have the best fellows, don't we, when we're so anxious that you should join us?"

Rupert laughed. "You're a persuasive little chap," he said. "But I'm sorry. I don't believe in it, Harry, and I can't join. Tell the fellows how much I appreciate the honor and all that."

Harry looked very downcast.

"They'll be awfully disappointed," he said. "I guess my brother Clark never saw any harm in the Crown. He was president of it when he was in school — and I think he's as good as there is."

"I guess he is, too, from what I've heard of him," Rupert said kindly. "But he's built differently from me, that's all. He's the sort of fellow who takes things as they are and makes the best of them; and I know his going into the Crown and using his influence must have done a lot of good. But I don't believe my going in would do me or the Crown any good. So I think I'll stay outside." He laughed and patted Harry's shoulder. "We'd better be going in to supper."

Harry was too disappointed to speak. Of all the boys at St. Timothy's, Rupert Ormsby was the one whom Harry had come to like best. He had been attracted to Rupert the year before, when the big fellow had entered St. Timothy's as a "new kid." Rupert's "build" had excited Harry's admiration, his candid blue eyes and friendly smile had won Harry's liking. There was a cheerful, independent freedom in his manner toward every one, old boys and new, and at the same time a kindly consideration for whoever might be his comrade — and he seemed hardly to have a choice of comrades.

As Rupert and Harry approached, one of two boys sitting on the dormitory steps rose and came forward to meet them.

"Hello, Bruce!" said Harry, and Rupert said, "Hello, Watson!"

Bruce Watson linked his arm in Harry's and walked with him carelessly up the steps, past his former companion, who stood to one side rather bashfully. Rupert nodded to this thin, shy fellow, and wondered why Watson

should have abandoned him so abruptly. Watson had nothing special to say, and when he accompanied Harry and Rupert inside and sat with them in the "common room," it seemed merely because of a preference for their society. And Rupert knew that Francis Stoddard, the boy who remained outside on the steps, had been Bruce Watson's closest friend.

That evening, before they went to bed, all the fellows in the Crown were aware that Rupert Ormsby had declined their election. Some of them, especially Joe Herrick, were for feeling insulted, but the general sentiment was merely one of surprise and disappointment.

"He simply does n't approve of secret societies," Harry said gloomily.

"It makes me a good deal less keen about him for president," said Joe Herrick.

"Oh, he's the fellow for it." Harry's assured, offhand declaration did not even invite a debate, and Joe Herrick was silent.

The presidency of the athletic association was, on the whole, the most desirable honorary office in the school. It was not that it ear-

ried with it any special power or responsibility; the only duty of the incumbent was to get himself up in his best for a public appearance on the annual field-day, and introduce to the audience the distinguished guest of the occasion, who was to make a speech and present the prizes. But it had become almost traditional that the president of the athletic association should be one of the great athletes of the school. And ever since the organization of the Crown, this office — like most of the important school offices — had been held by a member of the society. This year, before electing him a member, the Crown had “slated” Rupert Ormsby for the position.

The day after Harry's talk with Rupert was a Sunday. In the afternoon small groups of boys were assembled near the study building in the shade of the maples. It was a warm afternoon for the end of September. All the boys were arrayed in their best, with patent leather shoes, and trousers handsomely creased, and large, beautiful neckties. They were all of an age when they took a great deal of

pains to be well dressed. Some one had brought into the school the information that it was proper to wear one's coat with the lowest button fastened. All the boys were now observing this graceful, negligent fashion; their coats were drawn snugly about their waists and bulged comfortably about their chests.

A tall master with a brown mustache and eye-glasses, almost as well dressed as any of the boys, and resting his hip on a cane, stood by the doorway.

Now and then a group of boys would stroll toward him and touch their hats; one of them would say, "Bounds, please, sir?" and he would answer, "Yes, Nelson," or, "All right, Jones." That meant that they were free to walk out into the country beyond the school limits.

Harry Harding stepped out on the lawn in front of the chapel and began throwing a tennis-ball back and forth with Joe Herrick, just as if it were not Sunday. The master looked up and saw him.

"Harding! Herrick!" called the master,

frowning and shaking his head. "Must n't do that there."

"May we do it on the ice, sir?" Harry asked earnestly, and the boys laughed.

"You have a foolish wit, Harding," the master said, with an indulgent smile; and because he was indulgent he had to reprove Harry and Herrick a moment later for again throwing the ball.

Gradually the boys scattered, some of them going up over the hill, on which stood the red brick house of one of the masters, the others walking down the slope toward the mill-pond.

Francis Stoddard and Bruce Watson had been sitting together on the fence, and Rupert Ormsby had been sitting near them with two fifth formers. Suddenly Bruce slipped down to the ground, and said:—

"Well, so long, Frank! Harry Harding and Joe Herrick and I are going for a walk," and he turned and called, "Coming, Harry?"

The three went off together up the road.

Rupert after a moment called out, "Don't be so exclusive, Stoddard! Come over here!"

With a shy, grateful smile, Stoddard got down from his perch and joined Rupert and the fifth formers, Hall and Dennison. He did not know either of them particularly well, and pretty soon Hall said, "Denny and I were thinking of taking a walk. Won't you fellows come along?"

Stoddard was relieved when Rupert answered for him, "Oh, I think we'll sit here awhile and be lazy."

When the others had departed, he turned to Stoddard and said:—

"What's the matter with Bruce Watson these days?"

Stoddard flushed. "Why, nothing, I guess. Why?"

"You and he used to be as thick as thieves," said Rupert. He glanced at Stoddard with a friendly smile. "You're right to keep up the bluff. Let's you and me take a walk—and talk things over."

They went off in the direction opposite to that which Harry Harding and Joe Herrick and Bruce Watson had taken. They walked

down by the mill-pond, and round that off into the woods, and came out upon the road half a mile behind the school. For some time neither of them spoke. At last Rupert said abruptly: —

“ Did you know that Bruce has been taken into the Crown ? ”

“ No,” Stoddard answered; and he added, “ I don't know much about the Crown.”

“ That's all that's the matter with Bruce,” continued Rupert. “ He's just been taken in — and of course he has to be very intimate with the Crown fellows all at once. That was why last night he had to rush up and stick his arm in Harry's and walk off with him. And this afternoon he had to go with Harry and the rest to the regular Sunday meeting of the Crown — up at their sacred rock, you know. If you feel he's sort of — sort of going back on you, don't be troubled. Just put it down to his young enthusiasm for his new friends.”

“ I *was* feeling rather badly about it,” Stoddard acknowledged. “ You see, Bruce is

about the only fellow I've been intimate with here. I don't know why he should have gone about with me so much when he's such a popular fellow himself; but he did, and I liked him better than any one else. The last few days, though, he's been different somehow — and I was feeling kind of unhappy about it. I suppose," Stoddard added, timidly, "you're in the Crown?"

Rupert shook his head.

"Oh, I didn't know — I'm sorry — I supposed you were in everything," Stoddard said, in embarrassment.

"I'm not in the Crown, anyway," Rupert assured him.

"Of course when a fellow gets into that, it's natural he should n't care any longer for fellows outside," Stoddard remarked, with resignation. "The Crown must have such an awfully good time among themselves — always doing things together that nobody else knows about and having all sorts of private little jokes and things. Of course a fellow in the Crown can't be intimate any more with an

outsider, no matter how much he may like him."

"I think that's true," Rupert admitted. "But you'd better not feel badly about that."

"Well," said Stoddard, "I suppose a fellow can't help being a little more lonely."

"Oh, I refuse to be lonely," declared Rupert.

"It's different. You're in so many things. I don't see why you're not in the Crown," said Stoddard innocently. "Of course you're never lonely."

"I tell you what we'll do!" Rupert exclaimed, after they had walked on a little while. They were making a circuit back toward the school. "We'll get up a burlesque society of our own, just you and I. We two will be the charter members, and it will be very secret and exclusive, and it won't do a thing — except have a name and a burlesque society pin that we'll be very mysterious about. We'll elect other members, perhaps, and you'll soon find you won't be feeling lonely. Of course if we find our burlesque is making any

hard feeling, we'll give it up; but I don't believe it will. What do you say?"

"Oh, I think it would be fun," said Stoddard. His eyes were shining at the thought. "Thank you for wanting me to be the other member."

"I'll see about getting half a dozen cheap pins," said Rupert, "and we'll have to think up a name for it."

They walked on, talking about this, Stoddard never suspecting all the kindness that had inspired the idea. Rupert had proposed it with the thought that it might relieve the lonely boy's sense of desertion; it was a way of stepping into Bruce Watson's place.

Meanwhile the members of the Crown had, as Rupert had guessed, made off to their Sunday afternoon rendezvous. It was the absurd theory that, sauntering away in detachments, they excited no suspicion of their real purpose. When Harry Harding and Joe Herrick and Bruce Watson, who were the last to start, came up over the brow of the hill beyond the school, they found their comrades

sitting in line on the stone wall by the roadside. Then they all slipped down and marched together along the road. There were fifteen of them, and each one wore above the watch-pocket of his waistcoat a gold pin—a miniature crown.

They turned in at a path through a field. Crossing this field and climbing over the stone wall at the farther side, they came down into a hollow in which rose an enormous granite rock. Here they seated themselves, out of sight from any one passing by on the road.

“The meeting will come to order,” said Harry, rapping on the rock with a stick. “The chief business to-day is to decide whom we’ll put up for president of the athletic association. I guess we’re all pretty well agreed that Rupert Ormsby’s the man for it.”

“I’m not so sure,” said Herrick.

“Who else is there?” Harry asked.

“Well, there are plenty of others. Anyway, I don’t see why the Crown should put up somebody who’s refused to be a mem-

ber. If a fellow is n't with us when he can be, he's against us, and I don't see why we should be represented by such a fellow or do anything to help his election."

"But if he's the best man for the place" — struck in Harry.

"Any man's all right for the place — if he's a good fellow and popular with the school, and interested enough in athletics not to seem absurd in such a position. What I say is that now the Crown can't afford to elect Rupert Ormsby. The only way we can keep our prestige with the school is by keeping all the honors in the Crown. We've always had the presidency; we've got to have it this year just as usual."

There was an interval of silence after this speech; the boys looked impressed. Harry, in his zeal to save the situation for Rupert, adopted a weak argument — one that was a direct challenge to the pride of the society.

"There's nobody in our crowd we could elect over Rupert," he said.

"Oh, I guess there is," declared Tom Albree.

And then Frank Windsor, who was Harry's roommate, spoke up: —

“What's the matter with Harry? I bet we could elect him!”

There was a general murmur of applause at this, and Harry turned red and laughed. “Oh, talk sense,” he urged. “Who is there that can stand the least show against Rupert Ormsby?”

“That's all right,” Frank Windsor persisted. “I'm talking sense.”

“Harry's about the most popular fellow in the school,” said Bruce Watson.

“Yes. And it makes no difference if he isn't a great athlete. It's popularity that counts.”

“He'll make a good deal better speech than Rupert Ormsby would.”

“He'll be on one of the club football-teams if he isn't on the school team — and that's athlete enough, really.”

“Oh rot!” Harry, blushing furiously, interrupted this confused, many-voiced recital of his qualifications. “You all know as well

as I do that the place belongs to the best athlete" —

"It belongs to the fellow that the school wants to give it to," cut in Frank Windsor.

"If the Crown nominated Rupert Ormsby the school would want him all right," insisted Harry.

"Yes, but the Crown won't nominate Rupert Ormsby!" said Joe Herrick, in a tone of triumph.

"It's kind of an embarrassing position for you, Harry, having to put the question of your own nomination," Frank Windsor said. "You'd better let me take the chair, and we'll rush you right through."

"Yes, give it up, Harry. Go ahead, Frank, put it through!" the boys urged.

"No, hold on!" Harry pleaded; but they drowned him out, crying: —

"Go ahead, Frank!"

Frank Windsor rose to his feet. "All those in favor of Harry Harding as the Crown's candidate for president of the athletic association please say 'Aye.'"

There was a loud response.

“Contrary minded, ‘No.’”

A faint “No!” issued from Harry, and provoked a laugh.

“It is a vote.”

Then they all jumped up, crowded round Harry, and shook hands with him and slapped him on the back. He could not help feeling gratified at such a demonstration of affection. And they all told him how right it was that he should have the place. He would simply be following in his brother Clark's footsteps. They told him that they guessed it ran in the family to be popular. Their satisfaction was so convincing and genuine that he could not feel really unhappy at having the honor thrust upon him.

The Crown discussed plans of campaign until the quarter-bell, sounding for the Sunday afternoon sacred studies, summoned them from their retreat. By that time each member had in his pocket a list of six boys whom he had promised to interview, and if possible persuade. As the meeting for election was not to be held

for a week, there was plenty of time in which to influence doubtful voters.

When the boys recrossed the field and came out into the road, Rupert Ormsby and Francis Stoddard were just passing. Stoddard dropped his eyes bashfully. Rupert waved his hand, called out, "Hello, fellows!" and hurried on.

At sight of Rupert, Harry's elation was momentarily subdued. The thought that he was pledged to win an honor which he did not merit and which a friend deserved smote sharply upon his sense of friendship and justice.

But Rupert swung out of sight round a bend in the road; the other boys kept tossing jokes and compliments at Harry and calling one another to witness his blushes; then they began to push him about with affectionate roughness; and pretty soon he had dismissed the compunctions pricking his conscience and fallen back on the comfortable feeling that he had done his best, and that if all the fellows insisted on electing him it would not be his fault.

CHAPTER II

THE campaign to elect Harry president of the athletic association was quiet but industrious. If a boy found himself walking with a member of the Crown, it was surprising how soon the conversation would turn to a discussion of candidates. The Crown adherent would ask his companion, quite deferentially, what he thought; and if the boy expressed the usual mistaken preference for Rupert Ormsby the Crown man would concede all Rupert's good qualities, but would say that in spite of them Harry Harding seemed to him the best fellow for the place.

If he was a skillful campaigner, he would enlarge upon Harry's excellent qualifications without at all detracting from Rupert's until the last, when he had perhaps got his friend into an agreeable and receptive state. By that time it would be safe, even while admitting Rupert's virtues, to be a little skeptical.

As an athlete Rupert was of course all very well, but were there not other things to be considered ?

Would not Harry be sure to make a much better speech and say the most graceful thing in the most graceful way ? After all, Harry had plenty of interest in athletics, and played games pretty well, considering his lack of weight. He was just as good a fellow as Rupert — better, maybe ; he was certainly brighter, and then his brother Clark had been such a splendid person — president of the athletic association and everything else. It would be rather a pleasant thing to let Harry fill his brother's place.

That was the line of argument which Harry's friends adopted, and along which they worked with more or less subtlety. At the outset, as they well knew, the odds were against them. It was difficult to demonstrate to the unprejudiced that Harry Harding had better claims to an athletic presidency than Rupert Ormsby. But the Crown expected by organized and consistent effort to overcome this difficulty.

Rupert was conducting no campaign ; he was simply favored at the outset by general sentiment.

The fellows in the Crown were most of them popular throughout the school, notwithstanding the fact that they kept pretty much to themselves. Therefore when an obscure and usually neglected boy found one of these busy, popular persons walking with him, or waving an informal hand with unaccustomed familiarity and joining him in preference to some more intimate companion, he thought that it was pleasant and added to the cheerfulness of life. He listened then with a sympathetic interest to this experienced person's confidential opinions, and naturally made an effort to share them.

In such circumstances an attempt to enlist his support for some less attractive candidate than Harry might have succeeded. As it was, the boy was usually willing to make some concession of opinion in Harry's favor. For Harry had the widest and most varied acquaintance of all the boys in the school. As editor

of the school paper and president of the literary society and head scholar of his class, he was in touch with the quiet, studious boys; as a cheerful, humorous, and occasionally mischief-making youth, he was always welcome in a gathering of the irresponsible and idle; as an enthusiastic and emulous admirer of the athletes, he was liked by them.

So the reports which his friends brought him grew steadily more favorable; and as the time for the election drew near Harry grew insensibly more covetous of the honor.

The conscientious reluctance which he had had when his friends had first proposed to make him a candidate had quite vanished. He had put down the uncomfortable feeling that his election would be absurd and grotesque, and an injustice to some one else. He set his imagination on that day in June when, after the last race had been run and the prizes had been brought out in front of the spectators' stand, he would step forward with a great red badge on his breast and introduce some famous man—a senator or a cab-

inet officer, or it might even be the President of the United States himself! For the President was a college friend of the rector's, and had promised to visit the school some time during the year and address the boys. There could not be a more likely occasion than on that of the great school field-day; and Harry dreamed of the honor of standing up before all the school and the visitors and introducing the President of the United States to them. Harry's brother and mother would be in that audience, and would they not be proud of him? Would not the other boys and the parents and the sisters of the other boys admire him and envy him? Even if it was not the President, but only a senator or a cabinet officer! When Harry let himself think of this occasion and all that it would mean to him, his hands grew cold with excitement and a sort of delicious fright, and his lips parted in a happy, dreamy smile, which anybody noticing it would have thought the most winning expression of a gentle, unselfish character.

Well, his thoughts at those moments were in a way tender and unselfish, for perhaps the pleasantest one of all was that about his mother and Clark. He would be glad to make Clark proud of him. For it was through Clark that he was having this last year at St. Timothy's and the chance to enjoy such honors. His mother could not have afforded to send him back; but Clark, traveling round the world as tutor to Archer Sands, who had overworked at school, was supplying the funds at a personal sacrifice. He would be back the first of June. It would make him proud then to see how splendidly his sacrifice had been repaid.

In a matter of so much personal importance, Harry did not stop to wonder if Rupert had dreams and ambitions, too. If he had thought about it at all, he would probably have decided that Rupert was too unimaginative to take any delight in the possibilities which the election would mean.

Francis Stoddard was made aware of the activity on Harry Harding's behalf. One after-

noon Stoddard had been at the playgrounds watching the football practice with most of the school. Bruce Watson, who had been looking on with Albree and Stearns, came up and joined him. When the practice was over, Albree called out, "Coming up to the school with us, Bruce?" and Watson answered:—

"No, I'm going to wait and walk up with Frank."

Stoddard was very much pleased—quite touched, in fact. Bruce had not shown any interest in him before for a good while, and this looked like a willingness to resume the former intimacy.

They walked up to the school together, Bruce with his arm laid affectionately across Stoddard's shoulders. And after a time, in the most natural way in the world, Bruce was expressing the idea that Harry Harding would be a mighty good president of the athletic association, and asking Stoddard to vote for him.

"Oh, but, Bruce, Rupert Ormsby's the fellow for it!" Stoddard cried.

"No, I really don't think so," Bruce said, and then he entered carefully upon the stock arguments of the Crown. They had no effect upon Stoddard. At the schoolroom Bruce parted from his friend good-naturedly.

"Well, you'd better think it over, Frank," he urged.

Stoddard lived rather out of the school world, and a good many things went on of which he knew nothing. The day after his friendly little walk with Bruce, however, Nat Belmont opened his eyes. Nat Belmont was shrewd and rather sharp-tongued, and took the cynical interest of an observing outsider in the doings of the Crown. He admired Rupert Ormsby, and having noticed the increasing friendship between Ormsby and Stoddard, he came up to Stoddard before dinner one day, and said:—

"It looks as if the Crown was going to lick Rupert for president."

"How do you mean?" asked Stoddard.

"Why, don't you know? They're going round, buttonholing everybody and asking

every one to vote for Harry Harding. Has n't Watson or some one tried it on you?"

The blood rushed to Stoddard's face. So that was why his old friend had walked with him so affectionately the day before — merely to make use of him.

"I did n't know about it," he said.

"Well, it's so. If you can do anything to help Rupert's chances, you'd better."

Do anything! Stoddard wished he could. But no one knew better than himself that he had no influence in the school. He had never done anything to compel respect other than that half-contemptuous kind which boys have for a capacity to get good marks and avoid bad ones. If he undertook to do any electioneering for Rupert he knew he would be regarded as a busybody, and those to whom he made his appeal would be more likely than not to think he was hurting his candidate's chances.

But he was indignant over what he regarded as a conspiracy against Rupert, indignant and grieved at Bruce Watson's duplicity. And

with his indignation hot upon him, he went straight to Rupert.

"There's something I think you ought to know," he said. "I've just found out that the Crown fellows are all going round trying to get Harry Harding elected president of the athletic association."

"Yes," said Rupert, rather amused by the boy's indignation, "I've known that. Harry's not much of an athlete, but he's a good fellow, and he'll be all right for president."

"It is n't fair!" cried Stoddard. "You're the only fellow in the school that anybody ever thought of. And now a whole gang is going round, using their influence to defeat you."

"Well," said Rupert, "why should n't they, if they want Harry for president and don't want me? As far as I'm concerned, he's entirely welcome to it. Personally, I would n't lift my finger to be elected."

"But you *ought* to be," insisted Stoddard.

"Oh, well," Rupert laughed, "it does n't matter. There's nothing to the office. If there

were anything to it I might get more stirred up. But it's just an empty honor. I don't care."

Stoddard looked at him with such keen disappointment that again Rupert laughed. Then he put his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"It's good of you, anyway, to take such an interest and want to help," he said. "Thank you, Francis."

"I don't care! I don't believe they can beat you! If there's anything I can do" — Stoddard's emotions were too stirred to permit him to continue. "I'm going to speak to every one I know," he added, after a moment, "though I don't know many."

"Well, don't make yourself unpopular on my account. By the way, I ordered those pins, — for that exclusive society of ours, — and they were to be here this afternoon. Don't you want to walk down to the express office with me and see if they've come?"

They had come; and in the basement of the study building, where the express office was situated, Rupert opened the little package.

"There, what do you think of that?" he asked, with a grin.

It was not an elaborate or even an ornamental pin — merely the two large letters SB twisted together in ordinary copper wire.

"What does it mean?" Stoddard asked.

"How about Society Busters?" Rupert answered. "But we need n't tell anybody; just keep 'em guessing."

At that moment Nat Belmont and Jerry Dorr came down the basement steps to the express office.

"Shall we elect them members?" Rupert whispered, on a sudden inspiration. "I've got a couple of extra pins. These fellows are not in the Crown, and I guess it would amuse them."

"All right," said Stoddard.

Rupert summoned the two boys, and then said to them mysteriously, "Do you fellows want to join the SB?"

"What 's that?" asked Belmont.

"A bluff," replied Rupert. "Some people will think it's a secret society, but it is n't."

It's nothing. All you do to belong is to wear the SB pin — and keep up the bluff. The members never know whether SB means Society Busters or Secret Bluff, or what. That's all there is to it. Want to join?"

"Sure!" they answered.

Rupert presented them with the insignia.

"Now," he said, "let's put our pins conspicuously on our vests and sally forth into the world. We've got about five minutes before study is called in — just time enough, if we keep together and hold a straight face, to start a nice little sensation."

They marched up the steps and sauntered about in front of the study, with their hands in their pockets and their coats wide open, exhibiting their pins. Francis Stoddard felt quite self-conscious, and had hard work to repress the nervous little smile that was twitching at his lips. A good many fellows seemed to be staring, and that both excited and embarrassed him. But the three other conspirators strolled about with faces that were quite unconcerned.

In a moment the boys were called in to study. Francis went to his desk, which was next to Bruce Watson's. As he sat down, Bruce looked at him curiously.

After an hour of study the master in charge of the room touched a bell, the signal for the five minutes' intermission allowed before the beginning of the second hour.

Instantly a confusion of talk and sound sprang up. Francis, engaged in finishing a Greek exercise, did not immediately leave his seat. When he did rise, Bruce Watson was waiting for him and Rupert Ormsby was coming down the aisle.

"What the dickens is that, Frank?" asked Bruce, putting out his hand and touching the pin. "SB. What's SB?"

Francis glanced up at Rupert for help, and Rupert answered. "SB is an organization of which Frank and I are charter members," he said. "I'm rather surprised you should ask, Watson. You ought to know the proper way to act about such things."

Watson reddened, muttered an apology, and

then made off. Rupert winked at Francis, and laughed.

Out in the hall Watson gathered a group of members of the Crown,—Tom Albree, Harry Harding, Joe Herrick, and Frank Windsor.

“Have you noticed the new society?” he asked them excitedly.

“Belmont and Ormsby and that crowd?” said Herrick. “I saw they’re flashing a pin on us. You think they’ve got a society?”

“I know it,” said Watson. “I’ve just been called down by Ormsby for inquiring. I know what it is! He’s got it up to buck against the Crown.”

“It can’t be!” exclaimed Harry. “Rupert told me himself he would n’t join the Crown simply because he did n’t believe in secret societies. After that he would n’t turn right round and organize one.”

“He has, though,” insisted Watson. “He as much as told me so. He told me he and Stoddard were charter members” —

“I guess,” Herrick interrupted, “he found he’d have to get up another society to work

for him, or else he'd lose the election. That's it. You see if there is n't a sudden outburst of campaigning for Rupert Ormsby now. And if he is elected, he'll make his society a permanent thing and try to lick the Crown in everything. You see."

"I think you're right," said Albree. "I hope, though, he's started too late."

Herrick's suggestion was most unwelcome to Harry, who was beginning to think, from all that had been told him, that his own election to the presidency of the athletic association was now assured. But if Rupert should suddenly inaugurate an organized effort in opposition, the issue would be placed in doubt. Harry did not feel confident of his own strength. And through the next study hour he sat with an anxious mind, which reproached Rupert for his perfidy. It seemed, after all that Rupert had said, almost incredible that he should have taken this step; yet there was the pin he was wearing as evidence, and the purpose of it seemed to Harry's agitated mind only too clear.

At the end of the hour, when the boys were walking away from the study building, Harry attached himself to Rupert.

"You don't mind my asking, Rupe," he began at once, "what's the meaning of that pin you're wearing?"

"Sh-h!" said Rupert. "We don't talk about such things."

"I thought you disapproved of secret societies," contended Harry.

"There are some things that are not to be discussed," Rupert answered coldly.

"Just the same, I think it's pretty mean of you to talk about the Crown the way you did and then go off and organize another secret society."

"Sh-h!" was Rupert's only reply, and it had such a teasing sound that it made Harry too angry to speak. He left Rupert when they reached the dormitory. Rupert entered and went upstairs to his room.

Harry waited outdoors with three or four other fellows. By and by Joe Herrick arrived, and then Harry accompanied him upstairs.

They had rooms in the same wing with Rupert Ormsby.

As they were walking down the long corridor, Francis Stoddard came out of his room, which was the last one in the wing. Herrick advanced, blocking the passage.

“Look here, Stoddard!” he said.

He took Stoddard by the arms and pushed him up against the wall. They happened to be close by Rupert's door, and the transom over the door was open.

Harry lingered out of curiosity. Herrick was always playing pranks with Stoddard, snatching his cap or his books, or holding him when the bell rang, and so making him think he would be late to chapel and get a black mark. Harry did not altogether approve of this treatment, but it had its amusing side, and now he waited with a certain expectancy.

“Let's have a look at this thing you're wearing,” Herrick said, and holding Francis hard against the wall with his shoulder and one arm, he reached down with the other hand and unfastened the pin. Francis struggled to pre-

vent him, but Herrick was strong, and held him firmly. When he had secured the pin, Herrick examined it. "What does this cheap thing stand for?"

Francis was silent.

"Not allowed to speak, eh? Some kind of a society. It can't be much if that's the best it can do in the way of a pin. SB. What do you suppose SB stands for, Harry?"

"Something Bum," suggested Harry, with a laugh; and even Stoddard's face, which had been anxious, twitched with an involuntary smile.

"You say Something Bum and I say Sour Boys," said Herrick. "What do you say, Old-Stick-in-the-Mud?"

He jammed Stoddard against the wall in a way that made him gasp. But Stoddard did not speak.

"I think," said Herrick, pocketing the pin, "that we'll keep this beautiful object as a souvenir of the Somewhat Bum Sour Boys. And now maybe you'll tell me what *you* call it. No? Oh, I think you will."

He began slowly twisting Stoddard's wrist.

At that moment the door by which he was standing opened, and Rupert Ormsby appeared.

"Standing by to see fair play, I suppose, Harry?" Rupert said in a calm voice, and Harry flushed and dropped his eyes. Herrick, startled by this sudden intervention, stood undecided, gripping Stoddard's wrist.

"I don't know why my coming out should make any difference to you, Herrick," Rupert continued. "You were just on the point of doing something. Why don't you go ahead?"

"I was just having a little fun with him," Herrick answered. "I was n't going to hurt him."

"Why, of course not," said Rupert mildly. "You were just going to persuade him to tell you something that you saw he did n't want to tell and that was no business of yours. You were n't going to hurt him at all; you were just going to try the effect of a little torture on him, — for you're nothing but a bully, after all, — and Harry was just going to stand by and be amused!"

"I was n't— you're not fair, Rupe!" cried Harry, choking with mortification and anger.

But he could not say another word in his defense, and Rupert passed him over with an ironical glance. Herrick still kept his grip on Stoddard, but he looked at Rupert with sullen eyes, in which there was as much indecision as wrath.

"You'd better mind your own business!" he said. "You're too fond of butting in."

"That comes well from a fellow who holds up another and takes his pin from him and tries to wring his secret out of him by force," Rupert said scornfully. And in a voice that took on a sudden cutting edge, he cried, "Now, then, you bully, take your hands off that boy!"

Herrick, with a sneer, said, "Are n't we the hero!" and dropped his hands.

"Give him back his pin!" ordered Rupert.

Putting his hand into his pocket, Herrick slowly drew out the pin. And then, instead of passing it over to Stoddard, he flung it the length of the corridor. Rupert sprang upon him, and pinioning his arms, ground him

against the wall and held him there as helpless as Herrick had a few moments before been holding Stoddard.

"I have half a mind," said Rupert, speaking between his teeth, "to tear that pin of yours from your vest and throw it out of the window. It's what you deserve. But I'll tell you what you'll do instead; you'll march down there and pick up Stoddard's pin, and you'll pin it on him with your own hands. That's what you'll do."

"I won't!" Herrick said furiously.

"I'll get it, Rupert," Harry said, in a chastened voice, and he started down the corridor.

"You'll let it alone!" cried Rupert. "Get out of the way!"

There was a moment's tussle and then Herrick came flying past Harry down the corridor, propelled by Rupert's weight. He brought up sufficiently hard against the wall at the farther end, and before he could turn, he was again in Rupert's grip.

"There's the pin," said Rupert, swinging him round with some violence. "Pick it up!"

And then Herrick obeyed. Rupert marched him back up the corridor to where Stoddard was standing. "Now pin it on him!" he said, and again Herrick obeyed. But when he had finished he turned toward Rupert a sullen and malignant face.

"You wait!" he said, and his voice was husky with passion. "You wait!"

Then he turned and went down the corridor, downstairs.

Harry loitered awkwardly.

"I'm sorry, Rupe," he said.

"You'd better be," was Rupert's curt reply. "If you really were, you'd say it to Stoddard, not to me."

Harry turned meekly to Stoddard. "I'm sorry, Francis — I am, honestly," he said.

"Oh, that's all right," Stoddard answered. "You didn't do anything."

"Yes, that was just the trouble," was Rupert's harsh observation. "Come along, Frank!" and taking the boy by the arm, he led him away.

Harry turned and went unhappily to his

room. He had been stung to the heart by the truth in Rupert's rebuke; and yet he felt that Rupert had been more cruel to him than he deserved.

CHAPTER III

AFTER a few hours Rupert Ormsby came to the conclusion that he had treated Harry with too great severity. He had a brief interview with Dorr and Belmont and Francis Stoddard; and then in the half-hour just before bedtime which was allowed the sixth form for visiting, he went to Harry's room.

"Hello!" he said cheerfully, when he entered and found Harry alone. "I guess I was a little rough with you before supper this evening. You needn't think I'm going to take back everything," he added, "because I'm not; but maybe you got more than you deserved."

"I think I did," Harry answered. "Of course I would n't have stood by and let Stoddard be really hurt. I'm sure I'd have—I'd have objected to that, anyway. Herrick had n't really hurt him, you know"—

"Yes, he was only beginning to hurt him,"

observed Rupert. "The thing is, a fellow like you, who can in a way create sentiment in this school, ought not to stand by and seem amused when Herrick bullies an inoffensive boy."

"I know it," admitted Harry, growing red. "I just did n't think."

"You're going to be elected president of the athletic association," said Rupert, and at this Harry grew more red and embarrassed, and did not know which way to look. "Now live up to the job, Harry — before as well as after."

"It's not my job, I guess," Harry murmured. "It's more likely yours."

Rupert shook his head and laughed. "Not for me. I don't care about it in the least, and I shan't stand in your way."

"It's mighty good of you to tell me that, Rupe," Harry said, with genuine feeling. "Of course, there's no reason why I should be president. If the fellows want to elect me I'd like to have it, but" —

It was easier for him to stop, leaving the sentence unfinished.

"There's one other thing I came to tell you," said Rupert. "You notice I'm not wearing my pin. You and Herrick and Watson needn't feel much worried about SB. I suppose you thought we were trying to work against the Crown?"

"We did have that idea," Harry admitted.

"I'll tell you about SB," Rupert said. "One day I saw Francis Stoddard snubbed by Bruce Watson, who'd always been his special friend. Watson threw him over — to run with some of you fellows after being taken into the Crown. I saw that Stoddard was feeling pretty sore and lonely, and I thought it would make him feel better to have somebody intimate with him. And then I thought it would be pretty good fun for him and me to pretend we were members of a secret society — that would seem intimate, all right. I thought, too, it would be quite a joke to get the Crown and the other fellows in the school excited about it. At the last moment we decided to take Jerry Dorr and Nat Belmont into our fake society; it would make it look a little more real.

But none of us wanted to stir up any bad blood, and apparently we've done that. So we've called the whole thing off, we've thrown away our pins, and you fellows in the Crown" — he laughed — "are still the only real, genuine secret society in the school."

Harry smiled rather sheepishly.

"Then we got so excited over nothing at all?" he said.

"It looks that way to me," Rupert answered, rising to go. "Herrick was so interested in SB, you might tell him now what it was," he added. "And Watson — I think it would be just as well if you told Watson why SB was organized."

"I will," Harry promised. "I — you make me feel quite small, Rupert — and at the same time I'm much obliged."

Rupert took his hand with a friendly laugh.

"I hoped there would n't be any hard feeling between us," he said. "Good-night, Harry!"

It did not soften Herrick's resentment and mortification when Harry told him the next

day that the new society had been all a joke ; it was rather more humiliating, if anything, to know he had been deluded as well as rebuked.

But Bruce Watson was more sensitive to Harry's lecture.

"The whole thing about the Crown, Bruce," Harry said to him, "is that if it's to have any influence at all, — and a good influence, — the fellows in it must take an interest in the fellows outside it. For a fellow to join it and then cut the friends he's had before is no way to do."

"I was n't meaning to hurt Stoddard's feelings," Watson said meekly. "I just did n't think how it would look. Of course I like him as well as ever, but now there's so much I can't talk over with him. You can't be quite so intimate with a fellow when you're in a secret society and he's not."

"Well, maybe you can't, but you've got to keep him from seeing it," insisted Harry.

Watson declared an intention of being more discreet in the future, and Harry felt quite virtuous. He believed thoroughly in being a

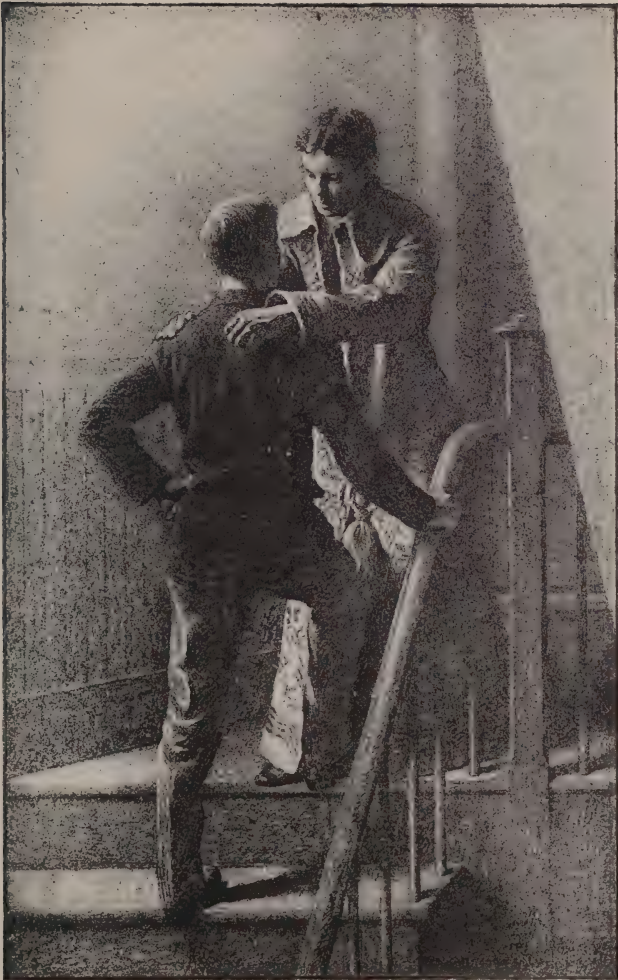
good influence in the school. He even made a point of going round among the members of the Crown and telling them in an emphatic way that they must not act like snobs and ignore fellows who were outside the society; he tried to impress it on them that it was their duty to be genial and friendly with every one.

“That’s what we’ve been this last week,” Tom Albree said bluntly. “That’s what’s going to elect you president.”

And at that Frank Windsor and one or two others laughed, and Harry looked annoyed.

“You ought to be that way all the time,” he said, “not just when you want to get something out of people.”

What with the virtuous consciousness of being a good influence in the school and the fresh security that Rupert’s avowed purpose not to contest the election gave him, Harry was quite happy. He went about with a brisk cheerfulness and a pleasant smile for the little boys as well as the big; he flattered a lot of small second-formers by kicking a football with them one day during the noon recess;



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"THE GANG IS GOING TO THE PIE-HOUSE TO-MORROW AFTER-
NOON TO DRINK YOUR HEALTH"

he went round among the quiet, studious boys of the fourth and fifth forms, urging them to write for the "Mirror," of which he was editor, and inviting them to come to his room and talk over with him subjects for stories and essays.

Nat Belmont remarked to Francis Stoddard that Harding was out "swiping" for votes; but this was hardly true. Harry's pleasant face and kind and friendly manner were not assumed for a purpose; they were natural to him when he was as happy as he was now. Everything seemed to be turning out just as he would have it. Rupert's denial of any interest in the election and failure to make any active canvass soothed Harry's conscience and raised his sanguine hopes.

The day before the election a thing took place that contributed more largely than any previous occurrence to his happiness.

The school was divided into two athletic clubs, the Pythians and the Corinthians, each of which had its football eleven. These two elevens contested for the school championship.

Afterward the school eleven, which played annually against St. John's, was picked from these two teams.

Harry had been out every day, practicing with the Corinthians, and although his roommate, Frank Windsor, was captain, Harry had never been given much encouragement. But when the list of the eleven was posted on the school bulletin-board, he was thrilled to find himself assigned to the position of right end. Holder, against whom he had been playing in practice, and who, he had supposed, would be given the place, was written down as substitute.

Harry turned away from the bulletin-board, swelling inwardly with pride. This event certainly vindicated him as a candidate for an athletic presidency. He had a glimpse of Holder's face peering over the circle of boys about the bulletin-board, and saw the shadow of disappointment that settled on it; and that for an instant made him uncomfortable.

"But somebody's always got to be disappointed," he thought, as he walked away.

He would have been less proud and happy if he had heard the consoling speeches that some of the boys round the bulletin-board made to Holder. They charged Frank Windsor indignantly with favoritism.

It was perhaps a tacit acknowledgment that there was some truth in the charge when Windsor came up, and drawing Holder to one side, told him that even though he was down only as substitute, he was sure of playing through part of the game.

On a Saturday night the three upper forms of the school gathered in the auditorium to choose the president of the athletic association.

One of the masters, Mr. Eldredge, opened the meeting by calling for nominations. There was a moment of silence; then Frank Windsor rose and proposed Harry Harding's name. Tom Albree seconded it; and then Francis Stoddard nominated Rupert Ormsby. There were no other names proposed. The tellers were appointed and the voting began.

Harry Harding, sitting in the front row with Bruce Watson and Joe Herrick, tried to appear

quite unconcerned. But as he turned round over the back of his chair to talk with some one behind him, his eyes were sparkling with excitement and there was a self-conscious smile on his face.

Rupert Ormsby, in the back of the room, was being disorderly in a juvenile way. With his foot up against the wall, he was jamming a line of chairs together, while everybody down the line resisted, and the two or three fellows nearest him heaved with shoulders and arms against his mighty back — all of them hilarious with laughter.

“ Harry pretends he does n't care,” said Nat Belmont to Francis Stoddard, “ and Rupert Ormsby really does n't care. That's what I like about him ; he does n't give a hoot.”

Mr. Eldredge rapped on the table for order ; the tellers were ready to make their report. When the room was quiet, one of them read :

“ Total number of votes cast, 94 ; Ormsby, 39 ; Harding, 55. Mr. Harding is elected.”

The applause that greeted this announcement came mainly from the front part of the

room, where the Crown adherents were massed, but it was loud and enthusiastic; and when boys began shouting, "Speech! Speech!" Harry rose, blushing, and bowed.

Mr. Eldredge resigned the chair to him, and Harry presided for the rest of the meeting with a confiding shyness and embarrassment that were rather winning. Frank Windsor was elected secretary and Dick Judson was elected treasurer; and then the meeting adjourned.

Boys crowded up on the platform to congratulate Harry, and flocked about him as he made his way out of the hall. Rupert Ormsby was among them, and gave his hand the heartiest grip of any one; and Harry said, "Thanks, old man!" very feelingly.

He sat up late in the schoolroom that evening, writing to his mother and to Clark of his election. The letter to Clark would follow him half-way round the world, and reach him probably somewhere in India. Harry knew that it would please his brother, wherever he might be.

When Harry was mounting the stairs of the

dormitory to his room, he met Joe Herrick, clad in a dressing-gown, rushing down to his bath. Herrick flung an arm about Harry's neck, and whispered: —

“The gang is going to the Pie House to-morrow afternoon to drink your health. You've got to come.”

“Oh, we'd better not,” said Harry anxiously. “Why, if we're caught, you know what it means — fired from school, maybe!”

“The rector would never fire any one just for that,” replied Herrick. “Besides, it's the risk that will make the fun. And to-morrow's my birthday, and I'm setting the crowd up — in your honor. They've all promised, and you've got to come — after all they've done for you!”

There was an unpleasant suggestion in that which stung Harry, and he said, with reluctance, “All right. I think it's foolish, but I'll come. I won't drink anything, though.”

“Nobody's really going to drink anything,” Herrick assured him. “Just a taste to go round — in your honor.”

“All right,” said Harry, and Herrick went bounding in his slippers down the stairs. Harry climbed the rest of the way with a less joyous heart than that which he had had during the first part of his ascent. He had never been to the Pie House in his life, and he was both ashamed and afraid at having pledged himself to this violation of the school rules.

The Pie House, in spite of its innocent name, had a doubtful reputation, and it was generally understood that the three or four reckless and daring youths who had visited it had done so to indulge a taste for other things than pastry. It was also generally understood that the penalty for visiting it was expulsion from the school; and Harry lay awake in bed and miserably pictured the consequences to himself and to his mother and to Clark if he should be caught.

The next morning he found all the other members of the Crown in a whispering, nervous, excited state over the expedition planned for the afternoon. They had all succumbed to Herrick's invitation. None of them had quite

dared to hold out against it for fear of being derided as a "softy," and now they were engaged in reassuring one another.

Harry said lightly to Frank Windsor and Tom Albree and Russell Stearns:—

"I'd hate to be snagged. It would n't be much fun getting fired."

"Oh, a crowd like this would n't be fired," declared Frank Windsor. "Why, they could n't fire us all—a crowd of the best fellows in the school—ten of us! And if they don't fire all, they can't fire one. The most they'd do to us would be to soak us with a whole lot of Latin lines for two or three afternoons."

"I guess that 's about right," Harry said more cheerfully. "And if we don't really do anything, I don't see the harm in looking into the Pie House."

"I'm not going to touch a drop," Frank Windsor said, "and none of you fellows who are on the Corinthian team can break training. Mind that!"

By giving such instructions Frank felt that as captain of the team he was doing his duty.

It was a fine October afternoon when the members of the Crown started out, disconnectedly as usual, for their rallying place. But instead of stopping at the sacred rock, they continued on across the pasture into the woods. They hurried single file along a path for a quarter of a mile, and then came out upon a lonely, back-country road.

“We’ve got the start of everybody else in school,” said Joe Herrick. “No masters out skulking will have got up as far as this yet, so we’re all right going in — and if we’re careful we’ll be all right coming out.”

After a time they came to a lonely, weather-beaten house, with three scrawny horse-chestnut-trees growing in the yard. The shades at the windows were discolored and torn, the stone step at the front door sagged away from the door-sill and left a gaping crevice. Altogether, the Pie House did not look very prosperous. But even in its dejected appearance it filled ten boys with excitement.

“One of you fellows stand down at the

bend of the road and keep watch," said Herrick, "and the rest of you pretend to be walking along. I'll see about getting in."

Then, while Tom Albree stationed himself as outpost, Herrick entered the yard and knocked on the door.

It was opened by a small, weak-looking man with a furtive and dejected face. Herrick spoke to him a moment, and then turning, beckoned to the other fellows to come. They crowded hastily into the house, into a bare room with tattered wall-paper and battered chairs, and closed the door.

The sad little man, who seemed to have a mean sort of quietness, set about serving them without speaking a word. He brought out a jug of cider and some glasses, which he filled and passed in silence.

"He's got nothing stronger," said Herrick. "But this is good hard cider, all right, and if you drink enough of it, it will make you feel pretty well."

"I don't think I'll take any," said Frank Windsor. "You fellows that are playing foot-

ball had better not take any; it's out of training."

"Shucks, Frank!" said Herrick. "I'm giving this party, and I've got to drink with my guests. Besides, a drop of apple-juice won't hurt anybody. Just touch your lips to it, anyway — for the sake of a toast. Now then, fellows, here's to our athletic president, president of the Crown, all kinds of a president, Harry Harding!"

They all raised their glasses and drank in Harry's honor, and cried, "A-ay!"

Then Harry, quite excited and happy, held aloft his glass, and said, "Here's to our host and his birthday!"

But just at that moment Bruce Watson exclaimed in a frightened voice, "Look, fellows, look!" and crouching to one side, pointed out of the window.

Doctor Vincent, the school physician, was coming up the path to the house.

CHAPTER IV

THE keeper of the Pie House seemed almost as much agitated as the boys.

“Keep still! Keep still!” he adjured them. “It’s the doctor come to see my sick wife.”

The boys were all crouching in corners and squatting on the floor to get below the level of the very low window-sill in front of which the approaching doctor must pass. The keeper of the Pie House slipped out into the hall and closed the door behind him. Albree, who was nearest, reached up and turned the key in the lock.

They all remained quite motionless, none of them even daring to glance up at the windows. They crouched with lowered heads, on the chance that if Doctor Vincent should look in he might not recognize them.

“We must n’t move. In this rattletrap of a house the least sound will be heard,” Frank Windsor warned them in a whisper.

"S-sh!" said Harry.

The doctor was entering the hall. Through the thin partition the boys could hear the creak of the boards under his feet, and then his cheerful greeting, "How are you, Shoop?"

They heard everything with the most terrifying distinctness. There was not much relief to the tension, even when they heard him pass the door and go up the stairs. They knew that they were prisoners as long as he remained in the house.

In another moment they heard him in the room above. After moving round for a while he evidently seated himself in a rocking-chair and rocked and rocked.

The boys cautiously, one by one, got themselves into more comfortable positions.

"Whew! That was a narrow escape!" Herrick said, under his breath.

"Do you suppose Shoop will squeal on us?" Albree whispered anxiously.

"No, he'd have no object." But in spite of this assertion, they all felt very distrustful of the furtive, mean-looking little man.

"We're not out of the woods yet," Harry whispered gloomily to Frank Windsor. "Suppose the doctor makes a long call? He may keep us here too late for us to get to sacred studies. Then what?"

This was a possibility which had not been considered, and its seriousness was admitted. If they should be absent from the class which the rector personally conducted, or even be late to it, there would undoubtedly be a searching investigation; and even if this led to nothing, the punishment for the lapse would be severe.

Frank Windsor looked at his watch. They had three quarters of an hour leeway, and they could at a pinch make the distance to the school in fifteen minutes.

"If only Doctor Vincent's coachman were not sitting out there!" muttered Herrick. "It would be easy enough to drop out of the window, run round the house, and get away. But I suppose that coachman would tell."

"He'd probably yell out and give the alarm," said Harry dejectedly.

There seemed nothing for them but to wait in patience and hope.

Meanwhile upstairs Doctor Vincent had concluded his examination of his patient and had given his prescription. He stayed on, talking cheerfully with the woman, who was suffering more from loneliness and overwork and nervous depression than from any bodily ailment. At last he rose and bade her good-by, but instead of going immediately downstairs, he said to her husband: —

“Shoop, I want to have a few words in private with you.”

The man looked frightened. “She — she ain’t dying, doctor?” he whispered. “Come in here.” He led Doctor Vincent into a room across the hall.

“No,” said the doctor. “She’s doing first rate; she’ll be all right in a few days. That’s not what I wanted to talk to you about. As I came past your windows downstairs, I looked in, and saw that you had been entertaining some guests.”

He looked at Shoop sternly, and the keeper

of the Pie House dropped his eyes in distress. Then he glanced up with furtive appeal.

"I ain't doing no harm to those young fellows, honest I ain't, doctor," he said.

"You gave the rector your word, Shoop," Doctor Vincent replied, "that there should be no more of this sort of thing. The school promised to help you. The rector's given you employment, and he promised to do more for you as long as you behaved yourself. You gave him your word. You not only went back on your word — you've done it at a time when you should have had nothing but gratitude to Doctor Davenport. After Mrs. Davenport had come up here herself and visited your sick wife and done things for her! I tell you, Shoop, I have nothing but contempt for such a fellow as you!"

There was a flush on Shoop's weak face, but now he looked at the doctor without faltering.

"You're too hard on me, doctor; honest, you are," he said earnestly. "I had n't a notion of selling stuff to the young fellows no

more, and when they came this afternoon I said so. But one of 'em explained it was his birthday, and they just wanted to pretend; anyway, they were having a — a blowout; and I had nothing but cider in the house, doctor, nothing but cider, honest — and that not what you might call real hard. So I thought there could n't be much harm in just pourin' 'em out a little of that. I've got rid of all my other stuff. I'll take you down cellar and show you, if you say so, doctor; I'll take you in and show you what the young fellows have been drinkin', if you don't believe me. But it's the truth I'm tellin' you, and I did n't go to break my word to Doctor Davenport — I did n't go to do it, honest."

"Very well," said Doctor Vincent, "I believe you. I believe you enough to make these terms: You give me your word that hereafter you'll turn away any boys who come to you, and that you'll not sell them even cider, and we'll let this matter pass."

"I'll give you my word, doctor — honest," said the man.

“All right. But remember! If you don't keep it this time, the school's done with you.”

Doctor Vincent went slowly down the stairs, and then, with a faint smile on his face, walked up to the locked door, and stood there, putting on his gloves. He did this very deliberately, enjoying the thought of the consternation he must be causing the culprits within.

For a moment, kind-hearted man though he was, he had a boyish impulse to open the door, just for the fun of seeing how scared they would be. But he contented himself with chuckling at the thought as he left the house.

He climbed into the buggy and drove rapidly away, but at the bend in the road he stopped his horse. Rupert Ormsby and Francis Stoddard were passing, and Doctor Vincent had an idea.

“Ormsby,” he called, “may I have a word with you?” And then, as Stoddard was considerably walking on, he added, “No, you, too, Stoddard, please.” But he addressed his words to Rupert.

“I've just been making a call at the Pie

House — and there are some fellows there who ought not to be. Now I don't like to report boys. I think, anyway, that for fellows as old as these are, the discipline ought to come from among themselves. I had just a glimpse, but I think some of them, anyway, are football-players. I wish, Ormsby, that you'd be on hand when they come out, and then pitch into 'em — for breaking training and all that, you know; give them a good dressing down and make them ashamed of themselves. I don't intend to push the matter any farther. You'll handle it for me?"

"Yes, indeed. It will be great sport. I love to scold," said Rupert, and the boy and the doctor laughed at each other in a way that Francis Stoddard did not quite understand.

"You'll have to keep a straight face or you won't do any good," said Doctor Vincent.

"Oh, I'll be harsh enough with them. If I find any football fellows in the gang I will work myself up into a perfect rage," Rupert assured him.

"You'd better be going along, then. They'll

be coming out pretty soon." The two boys touched their hats and the doctor drove rapidly away.

Stoddard and Rupert walked on in silence, and came in sight of the Pie House just as the lawless revelers, who thought they had allowed a sufficient time to elapse after the doctor's departure, were emerging. Herrick and Albree and Frank Windsor had already come out, and two others were in the doorway; and when they saw the two figures approaching along the road, they betrayed for an instant the most ludicrous consternation. One of the boys darted back into the house and banged the door, and the others stood dismayed.

"Oh, it's all right, fellows; it's only Ormsby and Stoddard!" Herrick exclaimed, after a moment, with contemptuous relief.

And at just the same moment Rupert was saying to Stoddard:—

"You've never seen me really fierce; you watch me."

Stoddard did not know quite what to make of the humorous gleam in Rupert's eyes, so

oddly followed by the heavy, determined settling of his jaw.

Harry Harding and Bruce Watson and the other members of the Crown came flocking out of the Pie House. Rupert and Stoddard sat down on the stone wall by the roadside and awaited them. They approached with an air of bravado. Coming out into the road, they nodded to the two boys indifferently, and were on the point of sauntering past, when Rupert observed, in an audible tone: —

“I see that the Crown has a new meeting-place.”

He got down from the wall, and in his most leisurely manner and with his hands in his pockets, but wearing an expression that was as grave as that of the other boys was troubled and resentful, he walked up to Frank Windsor.

“Look here, fellows!” His voice had the sharp, abrupt tone of command which they had never heard from him before except on the football field; and reluctant though they were, they stopped sullenly to listen. “Windsor and Herrick and Harding and Albree and Stearns!”

He enumerated the names with slow disdain. "Five fellows who are on the two first elevens — five fellows who are candidates for the school team! And right in the middle of the football season to sneak off and break training, and run the risk of being fired from the school, when you know how you're needed to help build up the school team! I want to congratulate you five. I want especially to congratulate you, Windsor, as captain of the Corinthian eleven, and you, Harding, as president of the athletic association."

"We didn't really break training," said Frank Windsor. "And they'd never have fired such a crowd of us."

"No, they'd never have fired a crowd of the best fellows in the school, as I think Harding once described you to me," said Rupert. "Perhaps not. But they would have suspended you — or put you on probation, anyway. You'd not have been allowed to play on any school team. You must have known that, all of you, and yet you deliberately ran the risk — ran the risk of crippling the school team and spoiling

its chances! Five of the best fellows in the school — who would have bragged of their loyalty! Five of our first eleven men, the Corinthian captain, the athletic president — and all that noble, noble institution, the Crown!”

He swept them with a look of scorn. Then, after a moment of silence, he walked slowly past them with his hands in his pockets and the faintest smile of contempt curling his lips, and as he passed he looked squarely into each sober, downcast face. Not one of the boys answered him a word, and he walked on and left them.

Stoddard accompanied him in a subdued silence. When they got out of sight and hearing of the others, Rupert turned to him with a broad grin.

“How about it? Was I fierce all right?”

Stoddard looked at him wonderingly. Then he answered, with a faint, half-comprehending smile:—

“Well, I should say! I’m scared yet.”

Rupert chuckled. “It was more fun than a goat. To see ’em all lined up there like little

kids, waiting for a licking! Once I thought I was going to laugh and spoil it all."

"But were n't you — did n't you mean what you said to them?"

"Oh, I felt quite badly about their actions," Rupert replied. And then he became more serious. "Why, yes, if I'd just seen them coming out of the Pie House and the doctor had n't given me any tip, I'd have had to talk to them, of course — sort of sad and sorry because they did n't have more sense. That's the way I'd have felt — and talked. But when the doctor told me to light into them — well, it was easy enough. Maybe it was better for them. Anyway, it was more fun for me. I guess they won't break training again in a hurry. Poor old Frank Windsor and Harry Harding! Did you notice them? They looked as woebegone as if they'd just been fired from the school."

"Some of 'em looked pretty mad," Stoddard said. "Herrick was mad."

Rupert laughed. "Well, I don't wonder," he acknowledged. "I guess maybe I was pretty

insulting. We'd better be hurrying along now, to get back in time for sacred studies."

Harry Harding "flunked" his recitation in the Bible lesson that Sunday afternoon. He could not remember for what Gibeon was distinguished. He stood for a few moments in silence and with a reddening face, and then began, "He was a great general."

"That will do," said the rector, and the class tittered. The rector made a mark on his form list with deliberation. He had a way of imparting to such a note of delinquency a dismal solemnity. Harry, the prize scholar of the class, sat down.

Rupert answered the question, and Harry was enraged to find that Gibeon was a city, and that the sun had stood still over it a whole day. It seemed to him that he had always known that. He had of course just confused it with Gideon.

It was hardly fair that he should get zero for the lesson, and be humiliated besides, for so small a slip. And then the fact that Rupert had answered so correctly and completely irri-

tated him. Rupert seemed to have a faculty for being always right and for making a fellow who made a slip of any kind feel needlessly small. Harry sat through the rest of that recitation in a mournfully resentful mood.

After the class was dismissed he avoided Rupert; but later in the day, just before supper, he came upon him and Doctor Vincent talking together in the hall.

Harry tried to slip by unnoticed; but Rupert, who had been laughing over something that he had been telling the doctor, turned and nodded with a casual good-humor, and said, "Hello, Harry!"

That evening, after the prayers in the common room, when the boys were getting ready to go down to the study for the hour of reading and letter-writing, Rupert, standing by the door, grabbed Harry's arm.

"Look here," he said, "you first eleven men are all candidates for the school team. You want to make it if you can, Harry. I'm going to keep watch of your playing from now on."

Harry felt that it was a kind and friendly and encouraging speech, and that for Rupert, at least, the unpleasant episode of the afternoon was all past and forgotten. So his heart was softened, and he walked meekly and alone down to the study, thinking that, after all, Rupert was a mighty good fellow.

Joe Herrick, however, was implacable, and that evening expressed himself to Harry bitterly about Rupert.

“He’s the kind that loves to go round spying on a fellow,” he declared. “He’s a goody-goody boy; he’s always parading to show how much better he is than anybody else; and I don’t care if he is a good football player, he’s a stiff. He’s bigger and stronger than me, and when I play end against him in the game between the Pythians and Corinthians next Saturday, I suppose he’ll do me up; but would n’t I like to show him how to play football! I bet it would take some of the superiority and conceit out of him if I only could. I’m going to practice hard this week all right, and may be I’ll surprise him yet —

the chump! He thinks because he's captain of the school eleven he owns the earth!"

Herrick went on raving in this intemperate fashion, while Harry attempted to put in a mild, persuasive defense of Rupert.

"Oh, you're too good-natured, Harry!" said Herrick scornfully. "You ought n't to forgive a fellow so easily that's been a chump. If I only get a good chance," he added, as he and Harry separated in the corridor of the dormitory, "I'll show him yet!"

CHAPTER V

HARRY laced up his canvas jacket with trembling fingers. His hands were clammy, and he had a scared feeling that today he was more brittle than usual. But he was not going to let any one see that he was scared.

All the boys of both elevens were dressing in the athletic house, and there was not by any means the noisy chatter that preceded the practice on an ordinary afternoon. The talk was in low tones and the laughter was subdued.

Two boys who were to be opponents in the line-up were dressing side by side, and boasting humorously of what they were going to do to each other, but generally the atmosphere of the athletic house this afternoon was business-like and serious.

Frank Windsor went round, nervously touching one after another of his eleven, and saying, "Hurry up, old man! Hurry up!"

His eyes shone with excitement and his cheeks were red; he looked flurried. Over in a corner Rupert Ormsby, with nothing on but one red stocking, sat patiently picking a knot in his shoestring and whistling in a subdued key.

Joe Herrick, all dressed, sat on a bench across the room and looked at Rupert's muscles. They were brown and big and active; there was something unpleasantly suggestive in the way they quivered and stood out in Rupert's arms when he was engaged in even the mild exercise of picking a knot.

"No joke having to go up against a big brute like that," thought Herrick. "But if I could only put it all over him!"

Frank Windsor clapped his hands and cried, "All out, Corinthians!"

Rupert, drawing on his other stocking, looked up with a smile. "We'll be with you in a moment," he said.

It was a snapping, bright October day, with a north wind blowing and clouds flying up over the brilliant woods that surrounded the field. Harry, running out into this clear sharp

air, felt a little stronger than he had been when he sat in the dressing-room and waited.

The Corinthians, who were spread along the nearer side of the field, raised a cheer for their team, and Harry, as he followed Frank Windsor and jumped over the rope, felt very proud.

Frank Windsor warmed his eleven up at once by giving them signal practice. Harry crouched and ran and went through all the motions with enthusiasm. It was not at all bad fun, this harmless showing off before a crowd of sympathetic spectators.

In the midst of it a cheer broke from the boys on the farther side of the field—the Pythian cheer; and at that Harry, who had just crouched in the mimic line-up, swallowed hard. The moment had come. Rupert Ormsby, carrying the ball, burst through the throng of Corinthian spectators, and followed by his team, ran out on the field.

“Now then, fellows!” Frank Windsor said, and his team gathered round him to receive the last instructions. Harry glanced out of the

corner of his eye at the other eleven, who were romping down toward one of the goals.

Two masters in white sweaters stepped over the rope. One of them called the captains to one side and tossed a coin.

Then Frank Windsor came running back to his team. "Our ball!" he said. "Get ready, fellows."

Pythians and Corinthians were cheering wildly while the two teams scattered to their places. Then the cheer was hushed. Harry stamped on a whitewashed line nervously. His heart was beating so hard that it seemed to bother his breathing.

The umpire blew his whistle, the ball went sailing down the field, and Harry rushed after it. Halleck of the Pythians charged down on him to put him out of the way of the runner who had caught the ball. But Harry dodged quite cleverly, and the next instant had flung himself headlong and made the first tackle of the game. It was a good play, and when he got up and heard the Corinthian cheering and found that he was still all right, he ran to his

position at left end with a wild satisfaction and eagerness.

He had been surprised himself at making the play. His success drove fright out of his breast, and in its place came a fierce determination. "I guess I'll be good enough to make the school team! I guess I'll show everybody it was all right to make me athletic president!"

His opponent, a fifth-former named Andrews, was a green player also. Pythians and Corinthians were alike expecting to see some ragged playing on that end of the line. The really skillful play would be on the other end, where Rupert Ormsby and Joe Herrick were matched against each other.

What Harry and his opponent, however, lacked in experience, they made up in zeal and aggressiveness; and they had to be continually warned by Mr. Eldredge, the referee, because of offside play and holding. Twice the Corinthians had to forfeit ten yards on account of Harry's offending in these respects.

But he was throwing all his strength into

the contest, and really doing better than he had ever done in practice. To Frank Windsor's surprise he was having a little the better of Andrews, and the Corinthian captain, when he finally got the ball on a fumble, made a short run round Harry's end, aided by the green player's interference.

Then the Corinthian crowd on the side lines began to throw up their hats and yell, and say to one another that Harry was a real "find," after all, and Windsor had known what he was about in putting him on the eleven.

Their enthusiasm was brief, however; for on the next two plays there was no gain. The Corinthians had to kick, and the Pythians ran the ball back to the middle of the field — for Joe Herrick, who should have got down and tackled the runner, came instead with an unexpected crash against Rupert Ormsby, and lay for an instant quite dazed by the collision.

When he got up, he was sullenly thinking that he owed Rupert another grudge. It was an absurd idea, but he believed that Rupert had knocked him over with unnecessary pub-

licity and violence, to shame him before the crowd.

And in the next mix-up, when Rupert made a dash toward tackle to help in the interference for a "centre" play, he received a sudden heavy blow in the side just under the heart; and he went down in the scrimmage with the breath quite knocked out of him.

He got up feeling a little weak, and walked round for a moment before going to his place.

When he did go to it, he did not settle down at once, but stood for a moment looking deliberately into Herrick's eyes with a faint smile. Foul play was something that had never been countenanced in these school games, and the boy who had now committed it was receiving from his victim as much surprise as scorn.

The humiliation of having to meet such a look from Rupert and of realizing that he had not been deceived as to the source or intention of the blow did not improve Herrick's temper. He dropped his eyes and crouched in position, and muttered, "Oh, play ball!"

Rupert made no answer. He got into posi-

tion, and the Pythian quarter-back gave a signal that meant a rush through right guard.

“Wait!” called Rupert, straightening up.

He ran to the quarter-back and whispered in his ear, then back to his place again. And in another moment another signal was shouted. Then, as the ball was snapped back, Herrick was hurled to one side like a pillow, and when he picked himself up he found that the Pythians had made ten yards round his end.

He took his place in the line. Rupert stood opposite him, with his eyes sparkling and a broad, good-natured smile on his face. And Herrick appreciated fully that Rupert had had his revenge.

The mild and legitimate character of it made it no more tolerable to the victim; and there was a deep, smouldering wrath in his heart, a bitter resentment of Rupert's greater strength, an angry wish to get even by taking some sharp advantage if the opportunity rose.

In the occasional breathing spaces as the game went on Herrick set his mind to devising some means of getting even — of com-

passing the advantage which would enable him to handle Rupert as he deserved. Unfortunately Joe Herrick was not a stupid boy.

The two teams were pretty evenly matched. The Corinthian guards and tackles were stronger than their opponents, and often broke through and prevented the end runs which the Pythians had been expecting to make with their fleet half-backs, and with Ormsby to assist at right end.

When the first half was two thirds over, and neither team had scored, and the ball was still in the middle of the field, the Pythian supporters on one side, in their orange and black caps, and the Corinthians on the other, in their blue and white caps, seemed trying to win the game with cheers.

Harry Harding and Tom Andrews were having an excited battle. Of the two boys, Andrews had the less nervous temperament. As the game progressed he became gradually more roused to its demands.

Harry had thrown himself with all his strength and violence into it at the outset,

and now he was beginning to weaken. He staggered round between plays, gasping for breath, and called for water, and sometimes lay on the ground after a scrimmage until the full time limit had expired. He had never been so used up in practice, and after each play he would lie wondering how much longer the half was going to last.

And all the time Andrews seemed to be growing stronger. Fortunately, Perry, the Corinthian left tackle, was able to handle his opponent and give Harry some support besides. And Harry, who was not unaware of this, had never felt more grateful to any one in his life.

Then, suddenly, the Pythians flashed their trick play. Rupert Ormsby darted from his position, and Andrews ran from his. They met behind the quarter-back, and nearly all the Pythian eleven ran with Andrews.

But it was Rupert who had taken the ball, and he and the quarter-back shot out round Harry's end, while nearly the whole Corinthian team was struggling to break up the attack on the other side of the line.

Perry sprang out and upset the quarterback, giving Harry a chance to make the tackle; and Harry dived headlong with his arms outstretched. But he had misjudged the distance, and missed Rupert by a yard, a glaring blunder for all the Corinthians to see. And Rupert went racing on his way, while all the Pythians streamed after him down the side line, tossing their orange and black caps, waving sweaters, and shouting: —

“Touchdown! Touchdown!”

Harry picked himself up. He stood for a moment, uncertain in his mortification what to do. But no one noticed him. Then he began to run in pursuit of the other players, who were now careering far ahead down the field.

He had not gone ten yards when a wilder outburst of cheers from the Pythians, a sudden universal up-flinging of caps and coats and sweaters announced to him that it was touchdown indeed. The two elevens were piled up together near the goal.

Harry trotted up dejectedly as the pile was

being pulled apart by umpire and referee. Frank Windsor got out from the bottom, and seeing Harry, ran up to him.

“That’s your fault! Don’t you let them get round your end again!” he said sharply. Harry felt hurt that Frank Windsor should speak to him in that way.

The ball had been carried two feet beyond the line. Harris, the Pythian centre, took it out, and Rupert kicked the goal. Rejoicing over this achievement was expressed in the reiterated, carefully separated shout: “Pyth-i-an! Pyth-i-an! Pyth-i-an!” reiterated with indefinite monotony. It grated on Harry’s nerves.

Frank Windsor, with the ball under his arm, walked angrily out to the middle of the field. Then he called his team round him.

“You fellows have got to play ball!” he said. “You’ve got to hold them — and you’ve got to tie that score. They had no business to get that touchdown, if you fellows out on the right had had your eyes open and played the game.”

The sudden unexpected reverse had put him into a bad temper, and as he finished speaking he gave Harry another withering look. He kicked a hole in the ground with his heel and put the ball down.

“Get to your places,” he said.

Then he drew back a dozen feet, and when the whistle sounded, he ran forward and sent the ball flying far up the field.

Harry had much the same chance as at the beginning of the game to distinguish himself by a diving tackle. But he was hurled to the ground by Andrews, who came against him full tilt with a leather-protected shoulder. And the runner carried the ball back thirty yards from where he had received it.

As the Corinthian eleven lined up amid more Pythian shouting, Frank Windsor clapped his hands, and cried desperately : —

“Stop them now! You ’ve got to stop them! Put some life into it!”

Frank Windsor, right half-back, was playing close to the line, and giving his particular attention to the support of Joe Herrick. Be-

tween them they managed to stop two attempts at end runs without gain.

After the second effort, Herrick, foreseeing that on the next play the Pythians would kick, ran round to Harry Harding. It was his chance to put into execution the scheme for getting even with Rupert that his cunning mind had devised.

“Andrews is always playing offside,” he whispered. “I can see — all down the line. Insist on Mr. Eldredge’s watching him — on the next play.”

Then he ran back to his position.

Harry, exhausted and excited, was in a state of mind open to any such suggestion. He cried out breathlessly: —

“Wait, Mr. Eldredge! Mr. Eldredge, sir!”

“What is it?” said the referee.

“I wish you’d watch Andrews, please. I wish you’d come to this end of the line and watch him a while. He’s always offside.”

“I’m not!” declared Andrews indignantly.

“Will you watch him, please, sir?” insisted Harry.

"I'll watch you both," Mr. Eldredge answered, and he stepped quickly out to that end of the line. "Come, play ball!" He blew his whistle. The Pythian full-back retreated to catch the ball and kick.

It was passed to him; he caught it and kicked it high and far. Andrews and Rupert Ormsby, the two ends, plunged forward to rush down the field and make the tackle.

But as Rupert charged past, Herrick thrust out one foot, and with a quick turn tripped him and sent him headlong. Then, without waiting, Herrick ran to get into the scrimmage.

Eastman, the quarter-back, who had caught the ball, was struggling forward, pushed and pulled by three or four others over the prostrate bodies of Pythians. Herrick hurled himself into the press, and in another instant went down with the heap.

When he crawled out from it, he ran to his position. But Rupert Ormsby was not there to face him.

Herrick looked up the field, and saw Rupert

writhing on the ground, where he had been tripped. Two of the Pythian team were already bending over him ; a third was running to the side line, calling for Doctor Vincent.

With a sickening fear and remorse Joe Herrick hurried forward to see what he had done.

Rupert's face was white and contracted in his effort to bear the pain in silence. His lips were tightly clinched, and as he turned from side to side, his right leg, stretched out upon the ground, lay motionless. Joe Herrick stood by, afraid to speak, and Rupert, glancing up at him, smiled feebly a moment, and then turned away his head.

Herrick recognized in that smile the same expression with which Rupert had conveyed his contempt for the fellow who would strike a foul blow. Rupert knew. Herrick stood by, heavy-hearted, and had nothing to say.

Doctor Vincent brushed past him and knelt beside the injured boy.

"The ankle," Rupert said, and the doctor unlaced the shoe on the motionless foot.

"Now, then," he said gently, and he began

to draw off the shoe. Rupert closed his eyes and set his teeth with a groan. Andrews raised his head and shoulders upon a pillow of sweaters.

"Never mind, old man," he murmured, and while Rupert lay with the perspiration oozing on his white forehead, Doctor Vincent drew off the shoe.

Herrick watched the doctor gently roll down the boy's stocking. He saw the unnaturally twisted ankle, and heard Doctor Vincent say, "I'm afraid it's broken, Rupert;" and then a sudden faintness assailed him.

He walked away from the group, and kneeling on the ground, pretended to tie a shoe-string, hanging his head low until the blood had run into it and revived him. When he looked up, they were carrying Rupert from the field.

Harry Harding came up to Herrick soberly. "How did it happen, Joe?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Herrick.

"What awfully hard luck for Rupert!" Harry murmured. "Captain of the school team

and everything—to have a thing like that happen to him!”

Herrick made no answer.

Pythians and Corinthians had alike been sobered by the accident. Many of them had trailed off across the field to find out the extent of Rupert's injuries, or, with more morbid curiosity, to see how he looked as he was being borne away. Now they were returning slowly, without enthusiasm.

But the game had to go on. Harris took Rupert's place as captain of the Pythian team, and summoned Tom Albree to play right end. Albree was inexperienced and weighed ten pounds less than Herrick, but to the surprise of every one he seemed from the first to be holding his own against him.

Herrick showed a lack of enthusiasm and aggressiveness. He moved slowly, and when Frank Windsor shouted at him, “Wake up, Joe! Get into the game!” he made no answer. Sullenness showed in his face.

Five minutes after Rupert had left the game the Pythians scored their second touch-

down, and in much the same way as they had made their first — on a long end run outside of Harry Harding.

Frank Windsor tackled the runner behind the goal-line and got up, fuming. He walked over to Harry.

“You’d better lay off,” he said. “Holder!” He beckoned with his hand.

As the substitute ran out upon the field, Harry, smarting under the disgrace, with a thick feeling in his throat and tears in his eyes, walked to the Corinthian side line. He put on his sweater and seated himself dejectedly to watch the rest of the game. He thought of how he had started in, hoping to distinguish himself, to justify his election to the presidency, even to make the school eleven — and he could hardly keep back the tears.

The half was soon over. The Corinthian players came trooping to take up their sweaters. Then Francis Stoddard stepped out from the crowd and went up to Joe Herrick, who was standing close in front of Harry.

“Do you know what you are?” said Stod-

dard. There was an intensity of feeling in his suppressed voice that caused Harry, overhearing him, to look up.

"No. What?" asked Herrick, with a scornful laugh.

"You're a dirty, cowardly, tricky player!" said Stoddard, still in a low, deliberate voice. "You tripped Rupert. You broke his leg. You know it."

Herrick looked at Stoddard's white face in sullen silence.

"You say things like that," he answered at last, "and you'll get your head smashed. You need n't think that just because you're so puny you can say *anything* without getting hurt."

"You ought to be ruled off the field — for keeps," Stoddard retorted, and turned his back.

Harry and three or four others of the eleven, who had been listening in amazement, crowded up to Herrick. "What's he talking about?" "Trip who up?" "You did n't, did you, Joe?"



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DOCTOR VINCENT BRUSHED PAST HIM AND KNELT BESIDE THE INJURED BOY

“No, of course not,” Herrick answered impatiently. “The kid ’s nutty.”

The reply satisfied the others; but Harry’s thoughts jumped back to that moment when Herrick had urged him to insist on having Mr. Eldredge’s attention. The incident suddenly assumed a peculiar significance; and Harry had but to look again at Herrick’s face to feel certain that Stoddard’s charge was true, and that he himself had been deliberately used in a plot to cripple Rupert.

CHAPTER VI

AFTER denying Stoddard's accusation, Joe Herrick stood for a few moments with his hands tucked up under his red sweater, staring with a frown across the field at the athletic house. The other members of the eleven were mingling with the crowd, receiving the condolences and exhortations of their supporters, but Herrick stood alone. He had few friends outside of the Crown, and the members of that society who were Corinthian sympathizers were already clustered round Frank Windsor, offering him advice, criticism, and encouragement.

Harry Harding was so sore over his failure that he did not join this group or seek to make himself in any way conspicuous. He was satisfied to sit on the ground unobtrusively with the substitutes. The swift suspicion of Herrick which Stoddard's words had roused in him had caused him for a moment to forget

his own unhappiness ; and he looked up at the lonely figure with a wondering interest, trying from the boy's face to fathom the truth.

Herrick started toward the athletic house, into which Rupert had been carried. But as he approached, an open carriage, drawn by two horses, came spinning down the road and stopped in front of the door. Herrick and some other boys ran forward and stood by while Rupert, wrapped in blankets, was borne out and placed gently on the cushions.

He looked pale, but he smiled and waved a hand at the group of his friends, who responded with a feeble cheer and cries of "Good luck, Rupe!" "You're all right!" Doctor Vincent got in beside him and the carriage drove away.

Herrick had said nothing and had not joined in the cheer. He walked with lagging steps back to the football field. About him boys were deploring the hard luck that had befallen Rupert and the school. With a broken leg he could never get round for the game with St. John's ; and what was the

school eleven to do without its captain and best player!

Herrick avoided talking with any one; he strolled down to one of the goals, where during the intermission two small boys were practicing drop-kicks, and stood there, looking on. They were very proud to have such a distinguished spectator, and did their best to show off; but he was really paying no attention to their efforts.

When the second half began, it was a different Herrick who went into the game. The listlessness and sluggishness which had characterized his playing after Rupert had been hurt had disappeared; and Tom Albree, who during the intermission had been flattered by the Pythians for the way he was standing up against the veteran, was pushed to one side, and foiled and upset until in his chagrin he was almost ready to cry.

“Herrick’s playing the game of his life!” one of the Corinthian substitutes said to Harry enthusiastically. “I believe we’ll make this a close game yet.”

"We would n't if Rupert Ormsby were still in it," Harry replied.

There was a bitterness in his answer that seemed to denote a lack of enthusiasm for the new vigor shown by his team. His friend looked at him in surprise, and supposed that Harry's bitterness was due to his removal from the game.

Two long runs round Albree's end, a few successful plunges through the centre, and Frank Windsor at last carried the ball across the line for the first Corinthian touchdown. Harry jumped up with the other substitutes, and capered and waved his arms and yelled; but it was really only a regard for external decency that prompted him. With the heaviness in his thoughts caused by his own failure and by Herrick's treachery, and most of all by Rupert's injury, there was no room for rejoicing. He shouted again when Frank Windsor kicked the goal, and again when, with only one minute left to play, the Corinthians rushed across the line for their second touchdown. Frank Windsor kicked this second goal, tying the score.

It was a tame outcome, and after the Corinthians had cheered their team for the uphill struggle, they flocked away as silently as the Pythians, who were cast down by their failure to achieve the expected victory.

With the game over, the boys fell to discussing among themselves the chief feature of it—Rupert's injury—and the effect it would have upon the school eleven.

Herrick freed himself from the three or four friends who came up to congratulate him on his playing, and turned to Harry.

“Seen Stoddard anywhere?” he asked abruptly.

“Yes, there he is—with Nat Belmont.”

“Come along,” said Herrick. Pulling Harry by the arm, he led him up behind Stoddard, and then called in a peremptory voice, “Stoddard! Look here a moment, will you?”

Francis turned, hesitated, and then, leaving Belmont, came back slowly to meet the two players.

“What is it?” he asked, in an unfriendly voice.

"I wanted to tell you that you're right and I lied to you," Herrick said. "I did trip Ormsby. That's how he got hurt. That's all I wanted to tell you. Now you can go back to your friend." In spite of his confession there was a scornful defiance in his voice.

"I knew you were lying," said Stoddard quietly. "I saw you trip him."

He walked away and rejoined Belmont.

"It will be all over the school in half an hour," Herrick said with bitterness, "and I suppose nobody will believe that I had n't any thought of hurting him. I did n't know it was going to break his leg."

Somehow, at this moment, Harry liked his friend better than he had ever done. There was more than bitterness in Herrick's voice; there was emotion, even a suggestion of tears.

"No, of course you did n't know," Harry said soothingly. "You only lost your head"—

"No, I did n't lose my head, either. I did it on purpose. I could n't handle him—and that's the way I thought I'd get even."

"Well, you did n't mean to hurt him."

"I did mean to play foul, though — and that's enough — for most people. I don't care. They can talk and think what they please. After this I don't say a word about it to any one. I guess I can stand anything that's coming to me."

Harry was silent a moment. "Aren't you going to tell Rupert?" he asked.

"He knows already. I saw it in his eye when he lay and looked up at me."

"Maybe he does n't know you're sorry."

Herrick kicked sullenly at the turf. "Yes, I suppose I'll let him know that. But I won't let anybody else know it," he added defiantly. "I'll ignore it; I don't care what they say or do. I had to tell you and that kid, Stoddard — because I'd lied to you and him."

Harry could say nothing, but he felt sorer for Joe Herrick than ever — and liked him better.

In the athletic house, while Herrick was dressing, the other players on the team

congratulated him and joked with him on having saved the day. Frank Windsor, as captain, was quite bubbling over with happiness. He slapped Herrick on the back.

"There's no doubt at all, Joe!" he exclaimed gayly. "You're the hero of the occasion. You're the one that did it."

"Oh, yes, I'm the one," Herrick responded grimly.

A few hours later the story of Herrick's foul play was known throughout the school.

Francis Stoddard had declared it in his first indignation to some of his friends. Then he had reported Herrick's confession to Nat Belmont and others. By supper-time the boys who had played on the Corinthian eleven were confronted with the sensational charge.

Frank Windsor laid it excitedly before Herrick himself.

"I have nothing to say," was Herrick's answer. Then when Frank Windsor pressed him to deny the charge, he said:—

"Ask Harry Harding, if you want. He knows."

Harry reluctantly admitted the truth, and then urged all the extenuating circumstances. Herrick had not meant to hurt Rupert; he had had a long grudge against him — which he ought not to have had, to be sure; he had been no match for Rupert in the game; and he had done what was often done in the big college games when the umpire was not looking.

The members of the eleven and the members of the Crown, to whom Harry made this appeal, were not disposed to judge Herrick harshly. But it was different with the mass of the boys. They remembered only that Herrick had played foul, and had crippled the captain of the school eleven, and they shunned him.

He for his part did not at once alter his habitual manner. He remained, as he had always been, proud and defiant, and his attitude did not tend to make the other boys more lenient.

But he showed a different side to Rupert Ormsby. The day after the game he was taken into the room of the infirmary where the

patient lay in bed, suffering the severe pain that had developed from the setting of the broken bone.

“How are you getting on, Ormsby?” he asked.

“Oh, pretty well, I guess, thank you,” Rupert answered cheerfully.

Herrick was silent a moment, standing by the bed, and Rupert said, “Won’t you sit down?”

“Of course you know how it happened,” Herrick said, not heeding the invitation, “and you must know, too, how sorry and ashamed I feel. If I’d supposed it would mean anything serious like this” —

“Oh, that’s all right.” Rupert stretched out a forgiving hand. “We won’t talk about it. I hear that you played the game of your life the second half — and kept us from pulling off the championship, after all.”

“You would n’t have thought I was doing much if you’d been opposite me,” Herrick replied, embarrassed. “Oh, it’s good of you to try, Ormsby, but you can’t let me down

easy. I played dirty football, and I hurt you badly, and I've spoiled your last year here at school, and — well, I appreciate your being so good about it, but I feel pretty low down just the same."

Rupert laughed.

"I used to think myself you were pretty low down, Herrick, but I don't any more. Now I tell you what you do — to square yourself. You've put me out of the game for good. It's up to you to see that the fellow who fills my place does it in such a way that St. Timothy's never knows the difference."

"I don't know how I'm to do that," said Herrick despondently.

"Why, I'll tell you. You're the best end in the school, and you've got to teach some other fellow how to play the other end. There are Andrews and Holder, and even Harry Harding — not much material to draw from, but I'll expect you to turn out a good end just the same."

Herrick was silent for a moment. Then he said:—

“Thank you very much, Ormsby. I’ll do the best I can. And—I hope you won’t be laid up for long.”

“I’ll be out, I guess, to see what kind of an end you develop for the game with St. John’s.”

Herrick went away feeling an honest ambition, wishing to look on fellows with a kindlier eye. But it was pretty hard when he found them surly or suspicious, and knew that they were commenting on him as a “mucker,” a dirty player, a mean, tricky cheat, who would stop at nothing.

He was grateful to Harry Harding, who stood by him, and to the other fellows in the Crown, who were still friendly; but he knew that throughout the school the sentiment toward him was that of Francis Stoddard, unforgiving and contemptuous.

Rupert sent a message to Frank Windsor, asking him to take charge of the candidates for the school eleven and act temporarily as captain; and accordingly Windsor posted a notice the next day, announcing the first practice.

“Ormsby says that you'll coach the ends,” Windsor said to Herrick, as they walked down to the athletic house together; and Herrick felt stirred by this formal recognition of his responsibility.

Out of all the candidates who presented themselves, Windsor picked two elevens. They began to play without any clear understanding as to who besides Windsor was in authority. Harry Harding was on one end, opposing Nat Belmont, a hot-headed, nervous boy, who was trying his best to be “aggressive,” but who knew very little about football. Herrick saw Harry break past him and make a tackle. Then on the next line-up Herrick ran in.

“Here, Belmont,” he said, “wait till I show you how to block your man off” —

But Belmont was already angered by his failure and excited by the game. He turned on Herrick with resentment for such interference.

“Thanks. I guess I don't need *your* help,” he said.

Herrick bit his lip, but controlled himself.

"I just wanted to show you" —

"Yes, I know there are some things you can show me — but I'd rather not learn them!" Belmont retorted scornfully.

Herrick turned. "Windsor!" he called.

Frank Windsor came running over from the other side of the line.

"Will you please explain to Belmont that Ormsby has asked me to coach the ends?" Herrick said.

"What's the matter with Belmont? Say, Belmont, you do as you're told. Herrick's running the ends, and you pay attention to him. Now mind."

Windsor went back to his position, clapping his hands and crying, "Play ball!"

Belmont submitted angrily. He believed that Windsor was managing things to suit himself, and that he had given authority to Joe Herrick because he was a fellow member of the Crown. He did not believe that Rupert Ormsby had ever delegated any such authority to the fellow who had meanly tripped him and broken his leg. He obeyed Herrick's

orders and straightened up to hear his criticism and advice, but he listened sullenly, and Herrick was conscious of the boy's resentment. He exercised his authority as little as possible. He did not go shouting and clamoring round like Frank Windsor, who had a great idea of the inspiriting quality in mere noise, and he did not jump into a scrimmage and begin scolding and denouncing whenever somebody made a bad play.

It pleased him afterward when Harry Harding came up to him and said: —

“You know, Joe, you're a mighty good coach! I believe I could learn something about the game if I could have you always looking after me.”

“Thanks!” Herrick answered, and he added, a little sadly, “I guess maybe you're the only one that feels that way.”

Nat Belmont certainly was unsympathetic. After the practice, still smarting under the humiliation of being coached by a fellow whom he despised, and indignant over the way in which Frank Windsor was managing

affairs in the interests of the Crown, he went to the infirmary.

He was admitted to the room where Rupert sat, propped up by a window, rapping on the pane and waving a hand at the boys who happened to be walking past. Belmont started in at once upon his grievance.

“Oh, hold on!” Rupert interrupted him, with a laugh. “Don’t be so hard on ’em, Nat. It’s all my fault. I asked Frank Windsor to run the eleven, and I particularly asked Joe Herrick to coach the ends.”

“Then if you did that, Rupe, I’ve got to tell you what I suppose you have n’t heard about Herrick” —

“Oh, yes, I’ve heard it. You mean about his tripping me. I heard it from him. He came and told me. And I have reasons for thinking better of Joe Herrick than I ever did before. You let him coach you, Nat, and see if you don’t think better of him, too.”

Nat Belmont was nonplussed. He did not like to surrender his grievance; but he was not an ill-natured boy, and when he was given

time to think, he had no tendency to be unjust.

"Well," he said, "if *you* feel that way about it," he laughed as he rose to go, "I guess I'll have to tell Herrick I made a mistake."

He did so, with an added word of apology.

"Oh, it's all right," said Herrick. "I don't blame you." And both this speech and the embarrassed manner of it surprised and touched Belmont. He went round telling fellows about the change in Herrick, and by his enthusiasm trying to repair the injury that he had done.

Francis Stoddard, however, ordinarily the gentlest and mildest of boys, remained cynical.

"Oh, he knows he must show a decent side to make up for what he did," Stoddard declared. "It's just like Rupert to forgive him so easily; but I don't."

Belmont, however, held to his opinion of Herrick's sincerity, and a thing happened which made him think better of Frank Windsor, too. At a meeting of the candidates

for the eleven, Frank read a letter from Rupert, tendering his resignation and expressing the feeling that since he himself could not play, some one else should be chosen captain.

"When he told me this," Frank continued, "I did n't say anything except that I'd lay the matter before you fellows. But now I say that we all refuse to accept Ormsby's resignation. He can be our captain even if he can't stir from his room. He can advise us and help us, and I say that we tell him so and refuse to let him resign."

"Second the motion," said Joe Herrick, in his gruffest voice.

The refusal to accept Rupert's resignation was unanimous. Nat Belmont had to admit that it was generous of Windsor to have proposed this action, for if it had not been taken, he would undoubtedly have been elected Rupert's successor.

When Belmont reported Herrick's act in seconding the motion, Francis Stoddard had only a sneering comment: "Trying to square himself with the crowd."

“Oh, well,” Belmont answered, “when a fellow’s trying to be decent, why can’t you let him?”

Stoddard flushed at the reproof, and refrained thenceforth from merciless remarks. As the days went by and he had a chance to observe personally the improvement in Herrick’s demeanor, and to come a little more often under the influence of Rupert’s tolerant attitude, his hostility relaxed; and at last one day, meeting Herrick alone in the corridor of the dormitory, he stopped on a sudden impulse, and said:—

“I have n’t been treating you very decently; I’m sorry.”

Herrick looked surprised and then embarrassed.

“Well,” he said, after a moment, “I was n’t blaming you much.”

After that they met and walked and talked together without much constraint.

Meanwhile Herrick had been working faithfully to fill the responsibility with which Rupert had charged him. He had picked on Holder

as the most promising player for the vacant end position, and day after day he coached him patiently, and tried to put "spirit" into him. It was "spirit" that Holder seemed to lack; he was naturally rather slow. Under this careful tuition he was improving, and Herrick seemed himself, through teaching, to learn. When he went into the practice he played better than he had ever done before. Harry Harding and Andrews were having a close race for the position of first substitute; Nat Belmont had been left behind. The team was working together harmoniously. Frank Windsor was doing better as Rupert's representative than he had done as captain of the Corinthians, and he seemed to be better liked. Once more a feeling of confidence began to prevail throughout the school. The boys began to say that even without Rupert they could beat St. John's.

It was rumored that Rupert, lying in bed, had devised some startling tricks which were to be the destruction of the enemy, and that the daily council which the eleven held in his

room was given chiefly to the rehearsal of these plays.

“He’s surely captain just the same as he always was,” Frank Windsor said one day, on emerging from one of these conferences.

And when, on the day of the great game, the two elevens, St. John’s in blue jerseys, St. Timothy’s in red, ran out upon the field, and the cheers for both rose in mad excitement, challenging one another, gayly defiant, the enthusiasm of even that moment was less than that which burst forth an instant later. For an open carriage, in which sat Rupert Ormsby and another, swept out from the woods road, and at once the whole line of St. Timothy’s spectators broke and rushed, shouting, to meet it — rushed and lined up again at the end of the field behind the goal-posts, where the carriage stopped.

“Rah, rah, rah, Ormsby!” they shouted again and again.

It was the first time since his accident that Rupert had been outdoors, and he looked on his friends now with his face flushed and his

eyes shining. He laughed, and hoisting a crutch in the air, waved it in acknowledgment of their cheers.

The boy sitting beside him in the carriage — a boy with a dark, handsome face, and older than Rupert — looked out on the crowd and laughed too.

“It’s Phil Ward!” exclaimed Harry Harding, who in his football clothes had run over to see the excitement. He turned to Bruce Watson. “It’s Phil Ward! He was here at school with Clark. I did n’t know that Rupe knew him! He was quite a fellow in college, too. He and Clark roomed together always. He used to play on Clark’s team.”

The game was about to begin. The boys ran back along the side line, and the two elevens separated to their places.

CHAPTER VII

THE chief reliance of St. John's was on their full-back, Hall Durham, who could outpunt by fifteen yards any one on the St. Timothy's team. The St. Timothy's ends and backs had been, therefore, specially prepared to meet a kicking game; theirs was the chief responsibility for making it ineffective.

Eastman, the quarter-back, and Frank Windsor had given a large part of each day's practice to catching punts. They were not likely to muff or fumble, but whether they would be able to run with the ball after catching it would depend entirely on the defensive work of the two ends. If this proved inferior, St. Timothy's chances would be slim; simply by kicking, St. John's could force her opponents back and back — and it was known that Durham was almost as good at kicking goals from the field as he was at punting.

As soon as they got the ball, St. John's

started in to test the efficiency of their kicking game. Durham sent a splendid punt, high and far; but Holder and Herrick managed to delay the opposing ends just enough to give little Eastman a good start, and to enable him to dodge the first flying tackle.

He ran the ball back twenty yards, and there was great cheering from the St. Timothy's side, where the result of this first kick had been awaited with apprehension.

The two boys in the carriage behind the northern goal-posts watched the play with keen eyes, and commented on it from time to time.

"That fellow who's in your place handles his man pretty cleverly," said the older boy.

"Oh, Joe Herrick! Yes, he's all right. It's the other end that I think may weaken. Holder's a green player, but he's doing well so far. How do you think they compare with your old eleven, Phil?"

Ward smiled. "After five years it's pretty hard to say. If you were in the game, Rupe, I might see somebody who was the equal of Clark Harding, but I don't just now."

Rupert laughed. "See anybody as good as Philip Ward?" he asked teasingly.

"Oh, about eleven. Fourth down! Neither side seems to gain much by rushing with the ball."

"Durham's going to kick again," Rupert predicted, and they both looked up the field in silent anxiety. The next moment there was a shout from St. John's, and Rupert uttered an exclamation of chagrin.

"Threw Windsor back a yard. Holder let his man through like a shot!" he muttered. "Now if we aren't able to gain, and have to kick" —

He said it all so moodily, resting his chin on his hand, that the older boy, glancing at him, smiled. A moment later, with St. Timothy's shouting, Rupert's face cleared. Windsor had made a twenty-yard rush through the centre.

"That puts us out of danger—temporarily," Rupert said. "But I'm afraid that Holder will make more such mistakes."

"Is he the best you've got? Who's his substitute?"

"Harry Harding."

"Oh! Clark's brother?"

"Yes."

"I remember seeing him once; but he used to be a light little thin kid."

"He's not very big now."

"Is he as good a fellow as Clark?"

"I don't know. I never knew Clark. But Harry's a mighty good fellow. If it's safe I'd like to put him in the last few minutes of the game. It would please him so much."

"He ought to be a good fellow," Ward said musingly. "Clark thinks everything of him, and from what I hear has done everything for him. I guess, Rupe, that if you were to put him in for a few minutes, being a Harding, he'd make good."

"He'll probably have a chance," Rupert answered.

Then, because St. Timothy's had the ball and seemed to be making, little by little, progress up the field, the talk between the two boys ceased, and they followed the game with a more intense interest. Up to the St.

John's thirty-yard line — so far and no farther did St. Timothy's work their toilsome way. Then they lost the ball, and again Durham kicked.

The object of the St. John's strategy became more apparent to Rupert and Ward. Resting during the first half on a defensive game, they hoped to tire out their opponents. Then in the second half they would open up their hitherto unrevealed attack. And as the game went on, although the St. Timothy's goal was never seriously threatened, Rupert's face grew anxious. When the half ended, neither side had scored.

The St. John's eleven trotted off the field and entered the athletic house, which had been hospitably placed at their disposal. Instead of following them, the St. Timothy's players wrapped themselves in the blankets that the substitutes flung about them, and then, accompanied by the great mass of their supporters, went up to the carriage in which their captain sat. Then Frank Windsor turned and addressed the crowd.

"Move back, all you fellows!" he said. "Nobody but the eleven and the substitutes wanted here. Everybody else get back."

He waved his arms, and three or four other players stepped out and began waving their arms, until the crowd had retreated, abashed. Then the team gathered close about the carriage.

"You 're doing well, fellows," Rupert said to them, his eyes shining with enthusiasm. "You 're holding 'em mighty well — and you have n't shown up any of your trick plays yet. Tilden, your man was getting the jump on you there the last few minutes. You want to be a little quicker; but that was good, the way you broke through on that last kick. Holder, try to stiffen up your end a bit. Sometimes it was pretty ragged; but you 're coming up to the scratch all right."

So he went down the list of players, criticising them when it was necessary, and then salvaging the criticism with some appreciative word, applauding enthusiastically without criticism when he could, and making each one in turn

feel, through some quality in his voice and the look in his eyes, that the interest with which he had been watching the player was not merely that of a captain, but also that of a friend.

When he had finished his comments, he laid his hand on his companion's arm.

"Phil Ward here ought to be able to give you some points," he said to the team. "He played on St. Timothy's five years ago,—with Clark Harding and Skilton and those fellows,—and you all know he's had two years on a 'varsity team since. Phil, won't you talk to them?"

Ward laughed, and putting his hand on Rupert's shoulder, stood up. He was a tall, handsome, dark-faced fellow, with black eyebrows that met above his nose. His expression seemed determined, and might sometimes be severe, but now there was a pleasant twinkle in his eyes.

"I haven't much to say," he answered, "after hearing your captain talk. He seems to have covered the ground. I thought you fellows played mighty well that half. I don't

know just how you could have played better. But — just the same, it was n't good enough. This second half you've *got* to do better. Every one among you must be a little better than himself. Then that way, all together, you can make up for not having your captain in the game."

He patted Rupert's shoulder and smiled, and the eleven and the substitutes clapped in a way that showed they had taken his speech to heart. When he had sat down, Harry Harding, trailing his red blanket, came round behind the carriage and up to the side on which Ward was.

"How do you do, Mr. Ward?" he said shyly. "I guess you don't remember me. I'm Harry Harding."

"Of course I remember you!" cried Ward, reaching out his hand. "You've grown a good deal, but I'd know you anywhere for Clark's brother. What do you hear from him?"

"The last letter I had was written from Cairo a month ago," said Harry. "He and Archer Sands were going up the Nile."

"I've heard from him since then, I think.

I'll see you later and give you his letter. I guess they're wanting you now."

The St. John's team was coming out of the athletic house. It was time to be returning to the field.

The second half revealed on both sides a less cautious and conservative style of play, and was, by contrast with what had gone before, sensational.

At the beginning, little Eastman caught the ball on the kick-off, and ran it sixty yards down the field, dodging and squirming out of the very arms of the St. John's tacklers; and St. Timothy's went delirious with joy.

Then the next moment the hero of this brilliant run, too excited perhaps by his achievement, fumbled the ball, and a St. John's player fell on it. St. John's lined up in a formation that bewildered St. Timothy's, quickly executed a trick, and sent their left half-back and left tackle skirting along one side of the field for a forty-yard run.

They lined up quickly and tried the trick again; but Herrick's mind had solved it, and

he burst into the core of the formation and threw the runner back for a loss.

Then St. John's kicked, and St. Timothy's returned the kick; and back and forth in the middle of the field the two elevens struggled. The time slipped by. Rupert Ormsby kept glancing nervously at his watch.

"Well," he said, in a voice that was undecided between relief and disappointment, "they're holding 'em, anyway. And there can't be more than five minutes left."

St. John's tried a mass play against the St. Timothy's centre, and suddenly, while the two elevens were jammed together, the ball rolled jauntily, unconcernedly, out from the scrimmage.

Joe Herrick, pushing on the outside, saw it first, made a leap, and caught it up from the ground. The next moment, with it tucked under his left arm, he was racing up the field, up toward the carriage in which Ward and Rupert Ormsby sat.

The St. Timothy's spectators rushed yelling, along the side line. Ward stood up in

the carriage, crying, "Come on! Come on!" Rupert hoisted a crutch, and shouted while he waved it.

But swift runner though Herrick was, the St. John's quarter-back was swifter, and heading diagonally up the field toward him, he gradually overhauled him, and at last, fifteen yards from the goal-line, hurled himself head-long through the air and dragged Herrick down.

It was the most daring and the prettiest tackle of the day; and at that the St. John's spectators swept up the field, swinging their caps and flags and cheering as defiantly as St. Timothy's were shouting joyously.

The St. John's captain rushed about among his men, slapping their backs, imploring them to stand firm. Frank Windsor was likewise going from one to another of his team, whispering what might be the magic word.

Then the teams lined up. Eastman, the quarter-back, had an inspiration.

"Fellows," he said, in a sharp voice, "Rupe's waiting for you just beyond the line."

Then he stooped and gave the signal. St. Timothy's charged forward and made a gain of three yards, and there was more wild shouting, and again Rupert was waving his crutch.

"You got near him that time!" cried Eastman, as the elevens lined up. "Mind, he's waiting for you!"

This time the attack was so desperate and concerted that it made ten yards, and the St. Timothy's cheer did not cease even when the players got to their feet, but continued and continued, the leaders of it having worked themselves into a frenzy.

And now, with only two yards separating them from the goal-line, with Ward standing up in the carriage and shouting, and Rupert gesticulating wildly with arm and crutch, Eastman made himself heard:—

"You're going to shake hands with Rupe after this play!"

He shouted the signal that meant Perry at right tackle was to open up a hole.

And Perry responded to the call. He charged against his opponent furiously, and

in the same instant Dennison, the fifth-form half-back, carrying the ball under his arm, came plunging through, and fell across the goal-line.

While the St. Timothy's spectators cheered and pranced and waved their flags, the players slowly got to their feet. The referee came up and looked at Dennison, who still lay, embracing the ball, a few inches across the line. The referee nodded, and then Dennison and the St. John's player, who had been hugging him desperately, rose.

The St. John's team walked disconsolately to the goal and ranged themselves under it, panting, with downcast heads. The St. Timothy's players were leaping and slapping one another and tumbling about on the field.

Rupert Ormsby lay back in the carriage with a serene smile of contentment. Then he thought of something, and sat up.

"Phil," he said to his companion, "don't you want to go down there and tell Harry Harding for me that he's to go on in Holder's place?"

Ward alighted from the carriage and ran to where Harry was standing with a group of the substitutes. He tapped him on the shoulder.

“Ormsby says you ’re to take Holder’s place now,” he said.

“Oh, he does!” Harry cried, in a voice quivering with excitement and delight. He tossed off his blanket, into the arms of two fellows who were already congratulating him. “Right now?”

“Yes,” Ward answered, with a laugh. “And go in and play like Clark.”

Dennison was holding the ball and Perry was getting ready to kick the goal when Harry ran out on the field. He said a word to Frank Windsor and turned to Holder, who shook hands with him cheerfully and then walked over to the line of applauding spectators. Their applause rose in another moment to a great height when Perry kicked the goal.

“And only one minute more to play!” Ward said to Rupert, as he climbed again into the carriage. “That’s what one of the linesmen told me. Oh, we’ve got ’em licked!”

In the remaining minute St. John's secured possession of the ball just once, and tried a run round Harry's end. He hurled himself recklessly into the interference, and by a combination of luck and judgment got his arms round the half-back who was carrying the ball, and dragged him down before he had gained a yard.

A moment later, as the elevens were lining up, the timekeeper blew his whistle. Harry had the distinction of making the last tackle of the game.

After a cheer for their defeated opponents, who returned it bravely, the St. Timothy's eleven rushed up the field and gathered close beside Rupert's carriage. Behind them, shouting and tossing their flags, assembled the proud, victorious non-combatants. Frank Windsor stood up on the step of the carriage.

"Now then, fellows," he said, swinging one arm enthusiastically — and at that he lost his balance and slipped from the step to the ground, and the crowd laughed.

But the next moment he had climbed up

again, as earnest as ever. "Now then, fellows, before you go in to dress, one cheer — three times three — for Captain Ormsby! One, two, three!"

Every St. Timothy's boy joined in that cheer. Rupert turned red and laughed, and then said something to Ward. And when the cheer was finished, Ward rose to his feet.

"Fellows," he said, "I say we cheer every man who played on the team to-day. First, left end" — He glanced down inquiringly at Rupert, who said, "Herrick."

"Three times three for Herrick!" cried Ward; and so he went down the list of players, and the St. Timothy's crowd stayed and helped him cheer them all, and last of all Harry Harding.

Then the gathering broke up. The members of the eleven ran to the athletic house; the other boys formed in column, arm in arm, and marched away toward the school, whistling the school song. And the St. John's boys who had come to see the game went straggling away very quietly.

“Well,” said Phil Ward to Rupert, “you did it, and I congratulate you.”

“Did nothing!” Rupert answered; and Ward suddenly recognized that the boy, in spite of all his happiness over the triumph of his eleven, was having at this moment his own private sorrow. So while they drove slowly away Ward sat in silence, allowing his companion to master this sudden bitterness. Then, as the carriage was turning into the road through the woods, the older boy said:—

“Would you mind stopping here and waiting for me a few moments, Rupert? I’d like to go into the athletic house and say a word to Clark’s brother.”

“All right,” Rupert answered, in a voice that was quite cheerful. “Wish I could go with you. Stop here a few moments, please, Patrick.”

Ward opened the door of the athletic house, and stood a moment, confused by changes in the place since the days when he had used it, yet pleasantly conscious that the spirit of it was the same.

The hot, damp reek of the great bathroom, from the open doors of which clouds of steam were issuing, the noisy, echoing voices of the boys, the heaps of dirty jerseys and moleskin trousers and heavy, cleated shoes lying about on the floor, the open lockers, in which clothing was crowded with varying regard for neatness, and, most of all, the boys themselves, loudly discussing, so earnest that they were forgetting to dress, forgetting, some of them, even to rub themselves dry with their towels, — these were the facts that somehow touched Phil Ward's heart and made him think of the time when he had been such a boy.

He looked about for Harry Harding, but saw no face that he recognized. In one corner a boy, stripped to the waist, lay flat on the floor, while another bent over him, kneading his back and rubbing it with alcohol. Ward stepped up and inspected the two; neither of them was Harry.

Over by the scales eight or ten naked fellows who had finished rubbing themselves down were waiting in line to see how much

weight they had lost in the game. Harry was not among them; and indeed, as Ward looked about on the boys, deprived of their distinguishing colors, he could not tell who belonged to St. John's, who to St. Timothy's.

He stepped to the door of the great steaming bathroom, where members of both elevens were still fraternizing luxuriously under the showers, carrying on incoherent conversations in loud, echoing voices; and as he stood here, Harry came out, dripping, wringing the water from his hair.

"Hello!" said Ward, and Harry looked up at him from under his wet locks. "Congratulate you." He held out his hand.

"Thanks," said Harry. "My hand's all wet" —

"I don't mind a little thing like that. Now you'd better get to work and rub yourself down."

And while Harry, in accordance with this advice, seized a towel and began to polish himself to a bright pink, Ward stood by and made comments on the game. At last he said:

“Well, you’re a credit to the family, Harry. You did all that Clark himself could have done. I guess I’ll have to write to him about you. See you later; see you at the banquet to-night.”

Then he went to rejoin Rupert, and he left Harry feeling very proud and happy.

Frank Windsor and Harry walked up together to their room. Frank was tired, and stretched himself out on the window-seat; but Harry had not played long enough for that and soon found he was restless. He went out to look for friends and talk with others about the great victory. Downstairs in the common room a group was gathered, and Bruce Watson, spying Harry, darted out from it, seized him, and dragged him forward. One after another they shook hands with him.

“That was a great tackle of yours, Harry.”
“Too bad you weren’t in the game longer.”
“I bet you’d have done better than Holder.”
Such were the pleasant remarks that they showered upon him. And more than ever now he felt that he had won his spurs. He

was an athlete really; and for the first time he felt with a serene satisfaction that his title to the office to which he had a month before been elected had been fairly earned.

Another honor was to be his that night. While the boys were talking, Mr. Eldredge, the master who had assisted in coaching the eleven and who always presided at the banquet which closed the football season, came up.

"Harding," he said, and he beckoned Harry to one side, "I want to give you warning. We expect to hear from you at the banquet to-night in answer to the toast, 'The Substitutes.'"

"Oh," said Harry, pleased and excited, "I'll see if I can think up something. But I have n't much time, have I, sir?"

"We shan't expect a great oratorical effort from you," Mr. Eldredge answered, with a smile, as he turned away.

But Harry, with his imagination already stirred by this new opportunity, thought it quite possible that he might surprise Mr. Eldredge.

CHAPTER VIII

THE banquet was not to begin until eight o'clock. Harry, sitting at his desk, invited ideas for a speech.

“Substitutes” — it ought to be easy to invent something humorous and also something quite touching to say on the subject Mr. Eldredge had given him. Fellows working hard all the season — taking the rough knocks of better players, used as buffers by the first eleven, and then on the day of the game just wearing the first eleven’s blankets and toddling up and down the side-line. They *were* comical figures, — all bundled and blanketed, — but they were pathetic, too, and each one praying that some one on the first eleven would get hurt — not seriously hurt, of course, but just enough to have to leave the game. It was inevitable that a substitute should always

be in that state of mind, and it was an idea out of which something might be made.

Then, Harry reflected, he could become personal, and take up the cases of various individuals. There was "Fatty" Myers, who wore five sweaters, and whose heroic abstinence all the season from sweetmeats and pastry had delighted the scornful; there was Tad Melville, who, when he was not exercising, was reading books on "How to Get Strong, and How to Stay So"—nicknamed "Old Stay-So," in consequence. There were many little incidents that Harry began to see he could utilize in his speech, and he sat up to the desk and began to write.

He grew more and more wrapped in the work. One thought followed another, his lips curved now and then in appreciation of his own humor; and finally he became involved in an eloquent climax, full of feeling and sentiment and pathos.

He stopped in the midst of it to read back a little way and admire it. "Oh, by George, it's a good speech!" he said to himself. He

jumped about in his chair excitedly, and then with self-conscious art he finished his affecting peroration.

He felt in his heart that it would be a great deal better speech than any one else would make that evening, the only really polished and witty speech, the only one that would have any genuine life and originality. All the others would be like Frank Windsor's, entirely impromptu and commonplace. Harry swelled a little with pride in his accomplishment and in anticipation of the applause it would receive. It would be another proof to the fellows of his eminence.

The banquet was held in the choir-room over the library. All the eleven, all the substitutes, and two or three specially invited guests, of whom Philip Ward was one, sat down to it.

Mr. Eldredge and two other masters and Ward wore evening clothes. The boys had arrayed themselves in their best, and had at the outset an air of festive formality.

The two tables, of which one was much

longer than the other, were placed together in the form of a T. At the top of the T sat Mr. Eldredge, with Rupert Ormsby on his right hand and Philip Ward on his left. At the intersection of the T, and in the middle and at the foot of the long table, were placed great bowls of red carnations, and beside every boy's plate was a carnation for his buttonhole and a miniature football tied with a bow of red ribbon. The first thing that the boys did upon sitting down was to pin on these decorations. They were more restrained in their behavior than they usually were at meal-time. A glow of cheerfulness rather than a demonstrative spirit of triumph seemed to prevail.

Harry, sitting between Joe Herrick and Fatty Myers, was assailed by nervousness. The audience that he was to address seemed much more imposing than he had expected, and he suddenly became afraid that he would forget his speech.

So he took out the manuscript and surreptitiously tried to study it, holding it in the folds of his napkin; but both Herrick and

Myers detected him, and raised such an outcry that he had to put it back into his pocket. He did not want to have everybody at the table laughing at him. So he sat silent, trying to recite the speech to himself.

Before long the formality was all dissipated. Mr. Jackson, the choirmaster, raised suddenly, from his seat at the foot of the long table, the St. Timothy's song, which was at once taken up by all the others; and after that there was no more constraint. At last, when the ice-cream had been brought on, Mr. Eldredge rose and rapped on the table; and Harry felt a nervous, chilly tremor down his spine.

"We have now come," said Mr. Eldredge, "to the literary part of our celebration. I regret that we have n't a poet to do justice to our annual victory over St. John's."

There was loud applause for the phrase "annual victory," and Mr. Eldredge continued:—

"In default of a poet, I am going to call on one who, we can feel sure, will have something ready and appropriate to say to us, even

in spite of this suddenness. When by an unfortunate accident our team was deprived of its captain's leadership upon the field, it became necessary for some one to take his place, or at least to transmit his orders.

Who does i' the wars more than his captain can
Becomes his captain's captain, —

and I am going to call on Frank Windsor, who served as his captain's captain, to tell us how the game was won."

Amidst loud applause Mr. Eldredge sat down, and Frank Windsor rose. In spite of all his previous bravado about this experience, he was blushing most uneasily, and no sooner did he begin to speak than perspiration gathered on his forehead. He looked steadily down at his plate, and talked in a low tone and in very mixed, incoherent sentences.

Harry could not help feeling a superior satisfaction, as Frank went on stammering out his undigested thoughts. He himself would shine all the more by contrast.

Frank ended with a lame tribute to Rupert, and after repeating it twice in an attempt to

make it a little more graceful, abruptly sat down. The boys clapped him and laughed at him while he swallowed ice-water and then mopped his forehead.

Mr. Eldredge rose again, and Harry, with premonition gripping his throat, began moistening his lips.

“Mr. Windsor has told us how the game was won,” said Mr. Eldredge, “but I don’t believe he has told us the whole story. There’s a good deal that goes into the winning which never appears on the surface. It’s true in football as in most other things that ‘they also serve who only stand and wait,’ and I will ask Mr. Harry Harding—who did not wait in vain—to speak on behalf of the substitutes.”

Harry rose, beaming happily. Mr. Eldredge had given him just the opening for his speech.

“Mr. Toastmaster,” he said, “I have a quotation, too, for my subject:—

Wait, wait, wait,

On the cold, gray side line we!

And each tender sub asks his anxious heart,

‘Will they never call for me?’”

He spoke the lines so pathetically that they appealed to all the other substitutes, who began to applaud and laugh with great appreciation. That gave him confidence, and he went through his speech with a genial humor and enthusiasm which reached his audience. They laughed at his jokes, and were delighted by his sallies at the expense of Fatty Myers and "Old Stay-So;" and when he finished, it was with the comfortable sense that he had improved his reputation for cleverness.

The fellows near by congratulated him, and the applause lasted much longer than that which had consigned Frank Windsor's speech to friendly oblivion.

When it was over, Mr. Eldredge stood up again.

"If it is true," he began, "that 'calamity is man's true touchstone,' perhaps we ought to congratulate our captain this year on his test instead of condoling with him on his misfortune. I will venture to say that if he had been able to lead his team to victory in person, we should still not have learned to respect and

admire him so much as we do now ; and I believe that however well he might have played, he could not have done more toward winning the game than, by communicating his spirit and his influence to his team, he has already done."

Here Mr. Eldredge was interrupted by a burst of applause, louder and longer, Harry could not help noticing with a twinge of jealousy, than that which had just resounded for him.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Eldredge, "I am going to call on Rupert Ormsby to speak for the team."

While the clapping rose and continued, Rupert picked up the crutches lying beside his chair, and with them and Mr. Eldredge's assistance, got to his feet. His face was as red as Frank Windsor's had been, but it was with emotion rather than with confusion.

"Thank you, Mr. Eldredge," he said ; and the master sat down.

Rupert hesitated a moment, and then, as he leaned on his crutches, he smiled. "I guess

this team does n't need anybody to speak for it. Least of all a fellow that was lolling in a carriage while it was doing the work. Mr. Eldredge has just said some things that are very pleasant, but not very true. But part of what he said was entirely true; and that is that if I'd been in the game we would n't have done a bit better."

"Never said it!" interjected Mr. Eldredge, and the audience laughed.

"Well, you implied it, anyway," retorted Rupert humorously. "You were too polite really to say it. Joe Herrick, who played my end, did all that I could ever have thought of doing — and I dare say I should n't have been on the spot, as he was, to pick up that ball and put it where it would mean a touchdown. And Holder and Harding, on the other end, played so that nobody would ever have guessed we'd been afraid of a weak spot. And the others all played as I'd never, never seen them play. Mr. Eldredge is very generous, attributing so much of the winning spirit to me; but I want to say that the spirit that won that game

did n't belong to me ; it belonged to the fellows themselves.

“In fact,” — he hesitated again, and then went on, — “in fact, I've got to make a confession. When it was all over, and you fellows had won and the crowd was parading away from the field, I did n't feel happy a bit. I felt sore — sore because I was n't in it all, and because I'd had to see other fellows doing what I'd wanted to do. I can tell you this now, for I've got over it, and I do feel very, very happy. And I can honestly say now, as I look back, that I would n't have had things happen any differently. You won't all of you — perhaps you won't any of you — understand, but this whole thing has made me more aware of what there is in you fellows, and of the way you're good enough to feel toward me, than I could ever have been if I had n't got hurt and if I'd played in the game.”

And while, with Mr. Eldredge's assistance, he was laboriously getting back into his seat, and the boys, who had been very much touched by what he had said, were clapping noisily,

Joe Herrick was the only one of them all to appreciate the full significance of Rupert's last words. He found himself winking unaccountably to clear up the mist that had gathered in his eyes; and then on a sudden inspiration he mounted his chair, and shouted:—

“Fellows, all up, and three times three for Ormsby!”

Harry cheered with the others, but there was a little sting of disappointment in his breast even while he cheered. Somehow he knew that Rupert's speech had eclipsed his own brilliancy. When he sat down, he heard Fatty Myers say to some one across the table:

“That's about the best speech a fellow could make,” and Sam Morse answered, “You bet!”

Mr. Eldredge was whispering to Ward. Then he rose and rapped on the table.

“We have with us to-night,” he said, “a distinguished son of St. Timothy's—distinguished though still young. Every boy in this room is familiar with the career of Philip Ward, and can tell just how many years he

has played on a 'varsity football-team. And every boy in this room who aspires to play on a 'varsity team himself some day wants to hear from Philip Ward."

The boys showed their satisfaction by loud clapping and an eager pushing about of their chairs; and Philip Ward rose. Tall and dark, he was very handsome as he stood there in his evening clothes, and the boys all looked up at him with respectful admiration. His face, which was naturally rather severe in its clear, determined lines, lighted up as he smiled and bowed, first to Mr. Eldredge, and then, as the master sat down, to the others.

"Mr. Toastmaster and members of the St. Timothy's eleven," he began, "for certain reasons I could n't help comparing to-day's game with the last football game I ever played against St. John's. I roomed that year with Clark Harding, who was captain of the team.

"He was our best man — just as, from all I hear, Rupert Ormsby was your best man. But in the first five minutes of the game with St. John's Clark wrenched his knee, and had

to be carried from the field. He lay on the side line the rest of the game, looking on. He lay there and saw another fellow do the things he'd hoped to do. He lay there and saw this chap Skilton — and a corker he was, too — win the game. And yet of all the fellows that played that day you'd have said Clark Harding was the happiest — and so, I believe, he really was, except perhaps Skilton. But here's a thing I saw in our room that night — a thing I've never told till now."

He paused a moment ; the boys waited intently. Harry, of course, was listening with a proud and special interest. Rupert was sitting with his eyes lowered, thinking that he did not compare very well with Clark Harding.

"I was writing a letter home about the game, and turned suddenly to ask him a question. He was lying on the bed with his face toward me, dabbing the tears away from his eyes with a handkerchief. I knew it was n't the pain in his knee that made the tears in his eyes. He asked me why I wanted to turn

round just then, and I did n't say a word, and we neither of us ever mentioned it again. I knew that time about Clark, — just as all you fellows have known to-night about Rupert Ormsby, — that it was n't because he 'd missed the glory of making the touchdown that he felt badly, but because he 'd been shut out from doing the work and being useful. And I consider that an honorable sort of regret, with nothing small or mean or envious in it. And when you hear a fellow like Rupert Ormsby crying himself down for selfishness and pettiness, why, clap him the way you 've done to-night — and don't believe him."

They all laughed and clapped at this — except Rupert. And he sat blushing and feeling a good deal better than a few moments before, when he had foreseen a disastrous comparison with Clark Harding. Philip Ward continued: —

"When Mr. Eldredge told me I'd be expected to make a speech to-night, I thought perhaps the best thing I could do would be to talk on how to act when you go to college—

for I suppose most of you are going a year or two years from now. And it seems to me that the case of Clark Harding — which is the same, you see, as the case of Rupert Ormsby — gives me a good starting-point. Those two fellows are out to do something — not just to be prominent. At least, that's the way it was with Clark, and from having known Rupert since he was a kid, I think I can say the same for him. But we'll leave him out of it now; it's not fair to embarrass him any more by singing his praises. I'll stick simply to Clark.

“He was a fellow, I can tell you, that never once thought of the importance of being personally prominent. He never did things with that purpose in view. Now in that respect he was different from nearly every other fellow of his age; he was certainly different from me. Here at school I'd got into the habit of mistaking prominence for success; nearly every boy makes that mistake. It's only the rare fellows like Clark who don't make it.

“But the rest of us find out after a while that it is a mistake. We've gone to college,

just as we've gone to school, maybe — with just an idea of being socially prominent and popular, getting into clubs and societies, making athletic teams, holding offices, being talked about and looked up to as if we were somebody. And maybe we succeed in that ambition. And then, when we've done it, we find that it's a pretty empty success, after all.

“We find that some fellow like Clark Harding, who has n't lifted a hand to gain what we've prized, has got that and more, too. And we begin to feel like the pacemaker in a running race, who starts out as if he were going to leave the whole field behind — and then, after the first lap, is passed by every one. That's what comes to the boy who, either here or at college, acquires no more solid ambition than just to shine.”

Ward paused a moment, and in that interval, while the other boys were sitting gravely silent, Harry stirred in a discomfort that was almost physical. With a sudden sensitiveness, which had made him wince, he had felt that, unintentionally, this discourse was aimed at

him. And what made it more painful was that the brother whom he adored was being used to point the moral. How truly he knew that he himself was the boy who liked to shine!

“I hope,” Ward continued, speaking even more earnestly, “you won’t misunderstand me. Most of you fellows who are here to-night are prominent in the life of St. Timothy’s School. The fact that you are here is an indication of prominence. And prominence is not a crime; it need not be a misfortune. It means that you are having a larger opportunity to live than other boys — a larger opportunity to work and to play, a larger opportunity to befriend those who are more obscure, more weak, more unsatisfied and unhappy than yourselves. You have the opportunity for leadership; and leadership means a good deal more than walking at the head of the procession. The fellow who is after the ornamental features of leadership will never be a leader. He will only be that by doing the work and letting some one else attend to the advertising.

All good things await
Him who cares not to be great
But as he saves and serves the state.

“And you are saving and serving the state — this little state of St. Timothy’s — when you are building your own character. For when you are building your own character, you are — though you may not know it — helping some friend to build his. And character is the only thing that counts. Without character, muscles are nothing; brains are nothing; and though you had ‘the front of Jove himself, an eye like Mars, to threaten and command,’ and had not character, some homely, puny-looking dwarf, who has what you lack, may arise at any moment and upset you.”

He sat down; and after a moment of stillness, which attested the impression that his speech had made, the applause broke out. And Harry, applauding with the others, knew that his own clever little speech, over which he had so hopefully toiled, was already buried and forgotten.

But it was no longer this knowledge which

depressed him on this night of triumph and celebration. Philip Ward had, all unconsciously, shown him how unlike Clark he was, and it was this which stung.

When Harry came into his room that night he found a letter from Clark, postmarked Aden, lying on his desk.

It was the first unsympathetic letter that he had ever had from his brother. This was the part that hurt:—

“What the dickens is all this about your being elected president of the athletic association? It may be all right, but I don't quite see it. I never knew you were especially much of an athlete. It looks to me as if you fellows in the Crown had been playing politics. Have n't you got somebody else's honor away from him?”

CHAPTER IX

HARRY almost wept over this letter. To think that Clark, whom he had expected to make proud and happy by the announcement, should view his election in such a spirit!

Harry's disappointment was not accompanied by any bitterness against his brother; and he could not escape the justice of Clark's criticism. He admitted to himself that the Crown had played politics, but he had not himself encouraged this or taken part. There had been no real opposition to his candidacy. Rupert Ormsby, the only other fellow who was seriously considered, had been indifferent to the office; and, as it turned out in the voting, the majority of the school wanted Harry to be their president.

This was the explanation that he made in answering Clark's letter, and he added quite wistfully that he thought he had done some-

thing to justify such an election. He described the part he had taken in the football game, and recited Philip Ward's tribute to him.

"And I'm going to see if I can't make the track team in the spring," he wrote. "I'm a good deal bigger and stronger than I was when you last saw me, Clark."

In this way he sought to answer not only Clark's reproaches, but his own.

Clark had not suggested to him that he should resign the office, but it was a solution which presented itself to Harry's conscience. Yet he could not bring himself to make such renunciation. There was still the thought of that day in June to enchant him, the thought of standing up with the President of the United States,—or some one else almost as distinguished,—the thought of the pleasure it would give his mother — if not Clark!

He believed that Clark, when he was on the spot and saw how well his brother could carry off such an occasion, was bound to be pleased. So, although he had taken very much to heart what Philip Ward had said at the banquet, it

did not influence him into renouncing honors already won. It was as a suggestion for future conduct rather than as a corrective of the past that it was to have its effect.

He honestly wished now to evade prominence, to avoid being conspicuous; and he decided that the best way was by staying in his room and studying hard, and doing his editorial work for the "Mirror" with more care and with less of the eleventh-hour facility which he had been accustomed to give to it. In short, he was determined to see if he could not work in a quite unworldly way.

The time did not favor him; it was between seasons, so to speak, when there was not much to do outdoors. Snow and ice had not yet come, and in the recreation hours the boys roamed restlessly from room to room.

Harry's quarters had always been a rallying-place, and it was impossible to make the fellows understand that they were not so welcome as formerly, even if it had been true. Harry always confessed to a weak sort of gladness when they arrived and compelled him to put

away his work; and as for Frank Windsor, he could not endure either solitude or scholarship.

Yet Harry was making a struggle, and he acquired the habit of resorting in the afternoon to the library instead of to his room. There he found he could read and write undisturbed. And there, too, he began to take an interest in those queer, quiet boys who spent so much time at tables and desks that their sleeves were rubbed shiny, and whom Harry had been inclined to regard as the freaks and offscourings of the school.

They turned out to be more human than he had supposed. And he found that if he did not ridicule them, as many of the fellows did, they were rather pleased than otherwise when he uttered some extravagant sentiment to shock their primness.

During the rest of that term, which closed a few days before Christmas, Harry helped aspirants to construct stories and essays for the "Mirror," he tried to improve the standard of the paper, he availed himself of his author-

ity as president of the Pen and Ink to make out lists of references for reading on the subjects of debate. To the pleasant surprise of the rector and the masters, he began to show a faculty for being unobtrusively helpful.

It was in the Pen and Ink that Harry found the first urgent and difficult demand upon his newly awakened public spirit. There was only one vacancy left, and at the first meeting after Thanksgiving an attempt to fill this was made. Harry, presiding, called for nominations. Immediately Nat Belmont was on his feet, proposing Francis Stoddard. Some one else seconded him.

“Are there any other nominations?” asked Harry.

Frank Windsor rose. “I nominate Mr. Albee,” he said.

Harry looked surprised. His roommate had not confided this purpose to him. Bruce Watson seconded Albee's name.

There were no other nominations. Candidates were voted on in alphabetical order; therefore Albee's name was submitted first.

Two blackballs excluded a candidate from membership; and when the votes were counted it was found that Albree had received seven blackballs. Frank Windsor and Bruce Watson, who were sitting together in the back of the room, conferred in whispers after this announcement. Then Frank rose.

“Mr. President,” he said, “I’d like to say about Mr. Albree that he’s one of the brightest and most amusing fellows I know, and I don’t think the fact that he’s never done much in a literary way should count against him. He’d be mighty good in debates. He’s witty and clever, and I hope the society will feel like reconsidering its vote.”

“Mr. Stoddard has been proposed for membership, and will now be voted on,” said Harry, and Windsor sat down.

A few moments later Harry received from the tellers the memorandum announcing the result of the vote. He announced slowly:—

“Mr. Stoddard has received two blackballs, and is therefore not elected.”

Nat Belmont and three or four other fellows

sitting on the front benches twisted round and glared angrily at Watson and Windsor. Bruce Watson accepted the challenge of this glare, and rose.

“Mr. President,” he said, in a pacific voice, “I should like to say that Francis Stoddard is a friend of mine. I’ve known him and liked him for a long time, and personally I should be glad to see him in the society. But I can’t help thinking that Albree would be the better man of the two, and that his election would be for the better interests of the Pen and Ink. He’d do more to liven things up than Stoddard would. I hate, for personal reasons, to be opposing Stoddard, but that’s the way I feel.”

“Mr. President,” said Belmont quickly, “I move another ballot be taken on both candidates.”

The motion was carried without debate. This time Albree received nine blackballs — more than half of the total number of votes cast. Windsor and Watson looked grim. The ballot-box was passed for votes upon Stoddard’s name. He received, as before, two blackballs.

"Mr. President," exclaimed Belmont, "I move another ballot on Mr. Stoddard!"

There was no objection raised, but the third ballot showed the same result as the two previous ones. And a fourth ballot was taken, with no change.

"Is it the pleasure of the meeting that the balloting should go on indefinitely?" asked Harry.

Belmont rose. "Mr. President, it seems to me that two members are trying to hold up this society. Two members are keeping a fellow out that the society wants, in order to get in a fellow that the society does n't want. I suggest that one more ballot be taken to give these gentlemen a chance to show a better spirit."

"Mr. President," cried Frank Windsor, starting to his feet, "in reply to the gentleman's insinuations about holding up the society, I'd like to say I've as much right to my vote as he has to his; and if he thinks he can bulldoze me into changing it, he'll find himself mistaken!"

Belmont was quick to reply. "Mr. President, the only bulldozing that I've ever known of in this society has come from members of a secret society that meets somewhere off in the woods and tries to run the affairs of another."

Harry, flushing, rapped on the table and rose.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I think there's been enough of this. If we adjourn and talk things over among ourselves, we'll be able to settle them in a better temper. Will some one make a motion to adjourn?"

The motion was made and carried. Later in the evening Harry talked to Frank Windsor and Bruce Watson in his room.

"You fellows are in the wrong," he said to them earnestly. "Albree is n't as good a man for the place as Stoddard, and you can't persuade that crowd that he is. You can keep on blackballing Stoddard, but you'll never get Albree in. Now do you want to keep on,—and split the society,—and maybe do worse than that?"

"How worse than that?" asked Watson.

"There are some pretty plain hints. Some of the fellows think it's time there was a rival society started to operate against the Crown. Once that's done, it will mean a continuous wrangle in the school."

"I don't see why Stoddard's a better man," insisted Watson.

"He's written some pretty good stuff for the 'Mirror,' and Albree never has, for one thing," Harry explained.

"But Albree's more amusing."

"That's not really the point, and you know it, Bruce. Now are you fellows going to be pig-headed and make trouble, or are you going to give in when nine tenths of the society show you that you're in the wrong?"

"I told Tom Albree I'd get him elected; he wants to join," Frank Windsor muttered stubbornly.

"Oh, that's it!" exclaimed Harry, in a sort of exasperated despair. "And now you don't like to own up to him that you can't do what you promised!" He thought a moment, and then he said, "I tell you what, Frank. If I

go to Tom Albree myself, and explain how it is, and so let you and Bruce out, will you agree not to blackball Stoddard?"

They looked at each other and hesitated, and then said, "Yes."

It was a task repugnant to one who had always tried to bring pleasant messages to people and to evade the unwelcome word. But as president of the Crown, and also of the Pen and Ink, and in the interests of both societies, Harry fulfilled the duty.

Tom Albree did not take his rejection with good grace, and he believed Harry to have been at the bottom of it; in fact, Harry forced himself to be brave enough to declare his responsibility. Albree concluded that Harry was becoming officious, and thenceforth he felt less friendly toward him. But the threatening split in the Pen and Ink was averted, and there was a lull in the hints about the necessity of a secret society antagonistic to the Crown.

The Sunday afternoon meetings of the Crown had degenerated into empty, futile affairs. On cold, damp days the sacred rock held out no

attractions, and the prescribed meeting was a mere formality.

The society was at this inactive period so purposeless that it had nothing to do but to discuss the merits of the various fifth-form boys who might be called on to continue it. Harry had begun to weary of the impressive secrecy and exclusiveness of its performances. To march away every Sunday afternoon with the school looking on and holding its breath had ceased to give him a pleasurable exhilaration. The sham importance of it all made him now a little ashamed. He felt it was one of those vacuous manifestations of prominence against which Philip Ward had uttered his warning.

One Sunday, as the members of the Crown were proceeding to their rallying-place, they passed Rupert Ormsby, swinging along on his crutches, with Francis Stoddard walking at his side. It galled Harry to have to go by with the others and say nothing more than "Hello!" It grated on his sensitiveness, as if he were unwillingly a party to an insult, or at least a

deliberate slight. It seemed somehow especially unkind to pass a lame fellow who was limping along on crutches, and not linger and talk with him a while.

Moreover, with Harry's growing admiration for Rupert there had been a growing jealousy of Rupert's intimacy with Stoddard; and there was now perhaps a personal reluctance on Harry's part to pass and leave Stoddard in undivided possession of this intimacy.

At any rate, the incident prompted Harry to utter his protest as soon as the Crown was assembled at the sacred rock.

"Fellows," he said, "I'd like to know if you aren't getting tired of this secret society business? We all know it's just a fake. Isn't it about time to drop it?"

"Oh shucks, no!" declared Frank Windsor. "It's amusing, and besides, it keeps the other fellows guessing."

"This is n't our busy season," put in Bruce Watson. "When it's necessary to run things we can do a lot of good."

"It seems to me the Crown has done con-

siderable for you, Harry," said Tom Albree. "Just because you've got everything you want through it, I don't know that the Crown has outlived its usefulness."

Harry flushed. "That's not a very fair remark," he said, "even though it sounds telling. I think the Crown has outlived its usefulness, whether it comes with a good grace from me to say so or not."

"I don't agree with you," said Albree, in a chilly voice. The others remained silent, except for one or two muttered remarks, "I don't, either."

"Well," said Harry, with dignity, after a moment, "I don't seem in sympathy with the society, and I wish to tender my resignation as president."

"Oh bosh!" cried Frank Windsor. "We don't want you to resign; we won't have it. I move that Mr. Harding's resignation be not accepted."

The motion was seconded and carried, and then Joe Herrick, who had not spoken except to vote, said:—

“Just the same, I think there's something in Harry's suggestion. I believe it's worth thinking over.”

This from one who had formerly been the most partisan and narrow-minded upholder of the dignity of the Crown was startling, and the boys looked at Herrick in wonder.

“I don't see what's come over you, Joe,” remarked Albree discontentedly.

“It's just that I believe there's something in what Harry says,” Herrick repeated.

“Well,” Albree answered, “maybe you'll change your mind.”

The matter was for the time being allowed to drop. Harry afterward explained his views to Frank Windsor and one or two other members, but he did not convince them, and he did not press the agitation.

When hockey and snow-shoeing and tobogganing began, Harry found his diversions mainly indoors. He was a poor skater, he disliked snow-shoeing, and he was indifferent to tobogganing. His favorite diversion on winter afternoons in previous years had been to as-

semble a crowd of indolent companions in his room, brew chocolate for them, and devise with them disorderly plots and practical jokes, for which he had a conspicuous fertility of mind.

But now he resorted to the gymnasium, and trained with the first squad of candidates for the crews; and he abandoned his mischievously disposed friends to visit or walk with Rupert.

He found Francis Stoddard nearly always with Rupert, and that irritated him at first; but after a while he did not mind. As he phrased it to himself, Rupert's friendship was "good for two."

Stoddard played on the banjo, and taught Harry and Rupert to pick out several tunes. Both boys took a great delight in mastering this elementary accomplishment. Rupert's leg was getting stronger, too, and although he was not able to discard his crutches, he could swing along on them as rapidly now as any one would want to walk.

When there was no hockey, Joe Herrick sometimes dropped into Rupert's room, or

joined him and the others in their walks. At first Herrick's appearance made Stoddard shrink into his shell, but by degrees they became tolerant of each other, and at last even friends. So, uneventfully enough, the last days of the term slipped past.

The Christmas vacation was a long one. Rupert Ormsby went away from the school on crutches; he came back without them, declaring joyfully that his leg was as strong as it had ever been.

To demonstrate this, he joined at once in the hockey practice, and five days later played for the Pythians in the second of the interclub games, and helped them to win it by shooting a brilliant goal. The Corinthians had won the first game, but now, with Rupert showing all his old-time speed and skill, their prospect of securing the championship was dimmed.

The day after this game it rained, and then followed a week of thaw and slush, during which the boys who demanded exercise betook themselves to the gymnasium. Rupert joined temporarily the squad of crew candidates,

among whom Harry, with no chance in the world, was already enrolled. They were training under the leadership of Sam Morse of the fifth form, who had been the strongest oar in the boat the year before, and would undoubtedly be chosen captain.

The crew candidates pulled chest-weights a tedious number of times, and those who were regarded as most promising rowed on the rowing-machines, and then they all ended the day's exercise with a mile run — outdoors when this was practicable, but on rainy days on the short padded track of the gymnasium.

On the fourth afternoon of his crew practice Rupert Ormsby came down into the dressing-room after the mile run, and stretched himself, panting, on the bench, with his hands clasped over his eyes.

Harry, whose locker was near by, looked at him, and said: —

“What's the matter, Rupe?”

“Nothing — just a headache,” Rupert answered.

He sat up after a while and began taking

off his clothes. His face seemed to Harry unnaturally white.

"I've had a headache all day," Rupert said, "and running jolted it up a good deal. I guess a shower-bath may wash it out."

But he did not feel or look any better after he was dressed.

"I've had headaches before," he said to Harry, as they left the gymnasium together. "But this one's a corker."

He went to his room and tried to study his Greek lesson, but the harsh letters of the Iliad grew blurred and blinding before his aching eyes. Soon he put the book down, and lay with his eyes closed.

The school-bell rang, announcing the last recitation hour of the day; and Rupert rose, took his book, and went to the study building. He was called on almost at the beginning of the hour to translate. He tried to stumble through the lines, but after a moment he looked up at the master and said, "I'm not prepared, sir."

Mr. Allen glanced at him in surprise, and

then for the first time noticed the grayish pallor of his face.

"I'm afraid you're not well, Ormsby," he observed. "I'd suggest that you go over to the infirmary."

"No, sir, it's nothing," Rupert answered. He had a horror of the infirmary, where he had already spent so many weeks. "It's just a headache."

He sat down, and Mr. Allen marked him leniently for the failure.

For Rupert the hour of recitation dragged on with intolerable slowness. He could not look at his book. If he moved his head suddenly, pain darted through his eyeballs, and darkness shut down over them for a moment. The hot, throbbing ache seemed to vary its energy, now allowing intervals of relief between the pulses, now speeding up the battery and sending the shocks quivering in swift succession.

When the hour ended, Rupert got to his feet and stood a moment, swaying in giddiness. Then, with a fresh burst of pain, his eyesight

cleared, and he made his way out of the door.

He could eat nothing at supper; and afterward, as he was going up to his room, Mr. Eldredge, who was his dormitory master, stopped him.

“Rupert,” said the master, “I want you to go down to the infirmary.”

“All right, sir.” Rupert turned wearily, put on his hat and overcoat, and went out of the door.

Later that evening, when the half-hour allowed for “visiting” arrived, Harry knocked on Rupert’s door. There was no response. Mr. Eldredge, who happened to be standing at the head of the corridor, came down.

“Rupert won’t be in to-night,” he said. “He looked so sick, I had him go over to the infirmary. And since then they’ve sent over for his things—so I’m afraid he’s to stay there for a while.”

“What’s the matter with him, sir?” Harry asked.

“I don’t know. Nothing serious, I hope.”

The next morning, after breakfast, when they were on their way to chapel, Harry and Joe Herrick stopped at the infirmary to find out how Rupert was.

“He had a rather bad night,” the matron said to them. “He has a high temperature and he’s very feverish. In fact, — though it’s too early to be sure, — we’re afraid it’s typhoid fever.”

CHAPTER X

IN silent fear Harry Harding and Joe Herrick looked at each other ; then they turned and went silently down the infirmary steps. Typhoid fever ! That would mean that Rupert would be out of everything for the rest of the year — out of athletics, out of the school life !

That it might perhaps mean even worse than this was a possibility which neither of the boys entertained. Rupert was so strong, so healthy, that indeed the most morbid imagination could hardly contemplate a fatal termination to his illness. But that he should be ill — and with such a tedious disease — was bad enough.

“Perhaps it’s not typhoid fever,” Harry said hopefully, as they walked away.

Herrick shook his head. “She would n’t have suggested it might be unless she’d been pretty sure.”

Harry acknowledged to himself that this was reasonable, and they walked on for a time in gloomy silence. Then Herrick suddenly broke out:—

“Oh, I feel as if it was all my fault! If I only had n't tripped him up that day, this might never have happened!”

“What nonsense!” Harry exclaimed. “What had that to do with his getting sick now?”

“You can't tell; it might have everything to do with it. I suppose maybe he got all run down being laid up so long without exercise. Oh, honestly, Harry, if I could, I'd take his place now!”

“It will do him almost as much good to hear that you felt that way,” said Harry.

In the afternoon Harry went again to the infirmary, told the matron what Joe Herrick had wished, and asked her to repeat it to Rupert.

She promised to do this, but perhaps the message was never quite clearly understood in the boy's fever-burning brain. For typhoid

fever it was indeed, and of a malignant violence.

“He must have been walking round with it for several days,” Doctor Vincent said. And when the doctor was eagerly asked to express an opinion as to the probable duration of the illness, he shrugged his shoulders and answered, “That’s something I can’t predict.”

No one besides the doctor and the nurses was admitted to see Rupert, and the reports from the sick-room did not, for a couple of weeks, vary much from day to day. During all this time his temperature remained high; he was generally in a comatose, or, at least, a torpid, state; he had periods of delirium.

When, day after day, the boys stopped at the infirmary and received only the report, “He’s just about the same,” — never the encouraging word, “He’s better this morning,” — they began to grow more grave and apprehensive. Just when or how the undercurrent of dread began, no one knew; but it was whispered about that Rupert was not improv-

ing, and that his mother was coming on from Chicago, and that a specialist from Boston had been sent for.

Harry went each morning into chapel with the fear that this day the rector would read the ominous prayer for the desperately sick. So long as that was omitted, he felt that Rupert's illness was not critical. Yet Doctor Vincent never spoke with any confidence about his patient; all he would say was that the disease had not yet reached its climax.

Francis Stoddard went about like one bereft; he seemed really to take no interest in his school life any more. He was listless in the class which he had once led; he went off in the afternoons alone on snow-shoes through the woods, repelling offers of companionship; he took part with only a perfunctory spirit in the exercises of the Pen and Ink, which had at first awakened his enthusiasm.

Harry noticed his apathy, and in unobtrusive ways tried to rouse him from it. He appealed to Francis for help in a dearth of manuscripts for the "Mirror;" he had Fran-

is chosen as one of the debaters for the St. Timothy's medal in the great Pen and Ink debate of the year; and when there seemed danger of the boy's ignoring both these opportunities, Harry got him into a corner one day and talked to him.

"See here," he said, "do you think Rupert would stand for the way you 're acting? Don't you realize that the one thing he'd want would be to have everything and everybody going on just the same as ever? Buck up now, and don't be any different from what you'd like to have him think you. And say, Francis, can't you really let me have a story for next month's 'Mirror'?"

Francis could not help smiling a little at this appeal. "I'll see what I can do," he promised, and then he added, "Thank you, Harry; I know you're right. But I've felt too blue to be of any use, that's all."

"Well, have n't I been feeling blue, too? Not that I'm of any particular use, either; but I guess I can be as blue as you are." He patted Francis on the shoulder; and three

days later Francis brought him the manuscript, and told him that he had begun to work on the debate.

The days went by, and the question in the minds of the boys had ceased to be, Would Rupert be well enough to row or do anything in athletics toward the end of the year? Doctor Vincent had made it clear to them that of this there was no possibility. Even with the most rapid convalescence, it would be unsafe for Rupert to attempt any hard exercise for a long time to come.

When this was definitely settled, most of the boys in the school lost interest in his case. It was not because they were heartless, but it was as an athlete that Rupert was mainly known to them, and that they valued him. The dread which Harry and which Rupert's other close friends were beginning to feel and to try to put away from them had not yet occurred to most of the fellows, and they merely thought of Rupert as having a slow, stupid time, and hoped he would soon be sitting up, at least.

One morning after prayers, as the boys were passing out of the chapel, Harry saw a woman in black sitting beside the rector's wife. A certain familiar expression in her quite unfamiliar face caused him to glance at her a second time, and when he came down the chapel steps he said to Joe Herrick, who happened to be at his side :—

“ Rupert's mother has come.”

“ How do you know ? ” asked Herrick.

“ I saw her just now in the chapel. It must be his mother. She has the same way of looking at you from her eyes.”

He told three or four other fellows in the sixth form ; and before going to their rooms for the first hour of study, they loitered by the gate to see Mrs. Ormsby come out and make up their minds if it were really she. They had no doubt when she passed them, accompanied by Doctor Vincent, and turned with him toward the infirmary.

The boys had raised their caps as she went by, and she had swept them with a friendly, inquiring, almost wistful glance, as if she were

wondering who among them were closest to her boy.

"She does n't look so awfully sad," said Harry.

"She looks pretty sad," declared Frank Windsor.

Three days later, when Harry and Frank Windsor were invited to tea at the rectory, to meet Mrs. Ormsby, they found her quite cheerful.

"The turning-point ought to come within a week, Doctor Vincent tells me," she said to them, when they asked her about Rupert. "And the doctor says Rupert is in as good condition to meet it as can be expected in so severe a case. If it comes to making a fight, I trust him."

"Yes," said Harry. "We can all do that."

At that moment he felt that Rupert could have no better ally to aid him in such a fight than his mother. She had the same brave heart as Rupert, she looked at one in the same brave, trusting way. With the sympathy that came

from appreciation of his own mother, Harry felt that Mrs. Ormsby, by sitting at Rupert's bedside and holding his hand, could unite her spirit with his and bring him through triumphantly.

"He sleeps a great deal, and when he is n't asleep he's drowsy, and his mind seems never very clear," Mrs. Ormsby continued. "Sometimes he rambles on in talk about his friends and things he's been doing in the school. It's all disjointed, and I can't follow it.

"He's mentioned your names a good many times; and then there's a boy named Herrick and another named Stoddard that he talks about a good deal. This morning he was tremendously excited, addressing Herrick. It worried me, he was so excited. 'Herrick! Herrick!' he kept exclaiming, and then he quieted down, and said over and over again, in a consoling sort of way, 'It's all right, Herrick. Never mind what the school thinks; it's all right, Herrick.' And when he'd said that three or four times, he began to say, 'Thank you, Herrick, for wanting to take my

place, but I've got to play this half through myself, I've got to play this half through myself.' He dropped off to sleep still murmuring it."

Harry winked sudden tears from his eyes; Rupert had received his message.

"That will please Herrick," he said. "I'll tell him."

"I wish I could remember all he's said about you, Harry. They were very nice things." Mrs. Ormsby smiled. "He seemed so afraid you would n't understand why he was refusing to do something—to join some society, I think. He was afraid he'd hurt your feelings."

"He never did that. I—I guess I know what he meant."

Afterward, when they went away, Harry said to Frank Windsor, "That was the Crown Rupert was talking about." Frank nodded and made no answer.

It was three mornings after this, on Saturday, that Harry, trying to solve a neglected geometry problem in the few minutes between breakfast and chapel, found himself with too

little time to stop at the infirmary for news of the patient. Indeed, he had to go by the building at a run. He entered the chapel just as the doors were closing, and settled into his seat, breathless.

He was dreaming through the usual prayers when suddenly his senses started awake with a throb. The rector, in his deep voice and with an even deeper solemnity than that which had accompanied the preceding words, had begun the prayer — “O Lord, look down from heaven, behold, visit and relieve thy sick servant.”

Harry, with his heart beating fast in sudden fright, raised his eyes, and from where he knelt looked out into the antechapel. The rector's wife was there, with her head bowed; but the chair beside her, in which Mrs. Ormsby had been accustomed to sit, was vacant.

From the chancel the rector's voice, more solemn, more impressive, was proceeding; and Harry, conscious now of the meaning, closed his eyes again and echoed, with a fervent and imploring soul, that prayer — echoed it up to its submissive alternative — “or else, give him

grace so to take thy visitation, that, after this painful life ended, he may dwell with thee in life everlasting." Against those words Harry closed his lips.

On their way from chapel to the classroom the boys of the sixth form commented in subdued tones upon the rector's prayer. Harry demanded anxiously of one and then of another if there was any news. At last Joe Herrick edged through the crowd toward him.

"I stopped," Herrick said. "It's the crisis. Of course they've been expecting it. They can't tell how soon the turn may come, one way or the other. He may be like this for forty-eight hours."

"Like what?" Harry demanded.

"Fighting for life."

Harry put his hand out upon the banister rail and gripped it while he toiled up the stairs. The strength seemed to have gone from his knees; he had no heart for lessons or for play. Then he recalled the brave faith of Rupert's mother, — "If it should come to a fight," — and he kept saying to himself

as he continued on up the stairs, "Oh, he must get well, he *must* get well!"

Mr. Eldredge, usually so even-tempered, had a harassed look in the class that morning, and was severe with the boys who were slow or unprepared.

He sent Harry to the blackboard to demonstrate a theorem. Harry made his drawings languidly, and Mr. Eldredge looked on at him with an exasperation which the rest of the class noted. The work was done correctly enough, however; and when he had finished drawing the figure, Harry reached for a pointer with which to make his demonstration. In doing this he knocked down an eraser from its shelf. It fell clattering to the floor, and Mr. Eldredge, who had for a moment looked away, jumped.

"That will do for you, Harding!" he said. "Take your seat."

Harry turned submissively. The master saw there were tears in his eyes. He called on Francis Stoddard to finish the demonstration. At the end of the hour he asked Harry to stay

behind, and when the boy came up to his desk, he said: —

“Harry, I'm afraid my nerves are not very good this morning; you can guess why. I need n't have sent you to your seat.”

“It's all right, sir,” Harry answered. “Mr. Eldredge,” — he looked up at him appealingly, — “have you heard anything, sir? Do you think he'll pull through?”

“I've only heard that it's very critical.” The master gathered up his papers and books and walked away with Harry, talking to him about Rupert and recalling little acts of the boy which Harry had never known. “He's made the school better for being in it,” said the master, as they parted.

Harry sat during the next study hour on the window-seat of his room, with a Greek book open before him, but he looked out of the window more than at the text. He looked across at the gabled end of the infirmary, where he knew that Rupert lay. The things that Rupert had done, and those which Rupert had tried and had failed to do — he measured

beside them his own efforts and achievements.

What was most worthy in these had received impetus and help from Rupert; all that was mistaken had met Rupert's opposition. And now, as Harry's thoughts swept back over the year, he felt humbly how small and young a figure he had presented, how kind and generous to him Rupert had always been. At the thought of Rupert wasted away to a shadow, delirious in a darkened room, gasping for breath—Harry threw his Iliad on the table and buried his face in his arms.

That afternoon the Pythians and Corinthians played the deciding game for the hockey championship; and in the heat of contest no doubt the sick boy was forgotten. Pythian and Corinthian clashed sticks and sped after the puck with the ardent zeal to win; but when the game was finished, and the championship rested with the Corinthians, they made little parade of their triumph.

Instead, Tilden, their captain, skated up to Bruce Watson, who was leading the Pythians,

and after shaking his hand, said, "If you'd had Rupert, it would have been different;" and then together they skated to the bank and asked one of the bystanders if there was any news.

Harry saw only part of the game. He left it twice to walk up to the infirmary, in hope of being the first to receive an encouraging bulletin.

But it was always the same — "Condition unchanged." It was the last word that he heard from Mr. Eldredge when he went to bed that night; it was the response to his inquiry the next morning.

That afternoon, at the regular meeting of the Crown, which was held in Herrick's room instead of at the sacred rock, owing to a heavy fall of snow, Harry put forth his ultimatum. It was not conceived on the spur of the moment. It was the outgrowth of his reflections of the past few days.

"Fellows," he said, "some of you won't agree with me, but I hope, anyway, you'll listen. You all remember how Rupert Ormsby

once refused to join our society — and how some of us accused him of all sorts of motives. I happened to hear the other day — from his mother — that in his delirium he'd been trying to explain why he felt obliged to refuse — trying to put it so it would n't hurt my feelings. We all know now there was just one reason why he refused — and that was because he thought a secret society like the Crown was a poor thing in such a school as this.

“Now I want to say to you fellows that in my heart I believe Rupert was right! I could n't help believing it at the time, but I would n't own up to it. A secret society like this is apt to give its members a false idea of their importance, and make them jealous of the success of anybody outside. And it is a cliquy, undemocratic kind of thing, no matter how well it's run. Some day, if it's kept alive, a discontented crowd will organize an opposition society, and that will mean a continuous split in the school.

“Now I propose that we disband — and not

only that, but that we go to the fifth-formers that are expecting to be elected into the Crown and tell them why we've discontinued it, and ask them for the good of the school not to reorganize it.

“I wish you'd all talk it over now; and I hope you'll come to my opinion. I'd like to say one more thing,—not as a threat, or anything of that sort, you understand, but just because I have come to feel so out of sympathy,—and that is, that if you decide to continue the Crown, I want to resign, not only as president, but as a member.”

Herrick spoke up immediately in support of Harry's suggestion. Albee opposed it, and Bruce Watson deprecated it.

The others seemed disturbed in mind and unwilling to express an opinion. But at last Frank Windsor came out openly in favor of disbanding. He acknowledged he had been reluctant to take that view, but he believed there was truth in what his roommate said, and he had decided to back him up.

And that was the beginning of the end.

Gradually the others were brought round, and at last the Crown adjourned forever.

"It *will* please Rupert when he's well enough to hear it," Frank Windsor said to Harry afterward.

"If only he will some time be well enough!" Harry answered.

The next morning it seemed that Harry's wish might soon be granted. The welcome news ran through the school at breakfast that Rupert had passed the crisis, that the upward turn had begun. The prayer for the desperately sick was not said that morning in chapel. A new spirit of happiness seemed to have awakened and to pervade all the school exercises. It shone in the faces of masters and of boys.

Harry and Francis Stoddard went snowshoeing together in the afternoon, and found no words to confide to each other their joy. Frank Windsor and Joe Herrick, among the candidates for the crew exercising in the gymnasium, forgot in their pleasant thoughts the strain that was being put upon their muscles.

But after a couple of days the report from the infirmary was less favorable. Rupert did not improve as had been expected. There was still cause for alarm.

Within two weeks the relapse came suddenly. The school heard of it at noon. That evening, after supper, the rector entered the great schoolroom, where all the boys except the privileged sixth-formers sat studying.

They looked up with surprise and apprehension as the rector slowly paced up the aisle to the platform, looking neither to the right nor to the left. The master in charge of the schoolroom rose from his chair. The rector mounted the steps to the platform and stood beside him. And all the boys looked up in a breathless hush.

“Boys,” said the rector, in a quivering voice, unlike that which they were accustomed to hear, “one of your best-beloved comrades is lying to-night at the point of death. I need not ask you when you leave this room to go to your dormitories as quietly, as noiselessly, as you can.”

That evening Harry Harding, as he sat in his room, heard the bell from the chapel tower proclaim the end of study. He put aside his books, and waited to hear the familiar sound of voices and laughter, and of feet tramping up from the study building along the board walk. He waited, but he heard nothing.

At last, in wonder, he went to the window. It was a moonlight night. The board walk that led past the infirmary down to the study stretched shining and empty; but on each side of it were boys, singly and in groups, but all silent, trudging ankle-deep through the snow.

CHAPTER XI

HARRY and Frank were asleep in the morning when the harsh clangor of the rising-bell resounded through the dormitory. It approached down the corridor, rang for a moment before their door, and then receded, leaving them roused to the sorrow of the day.

Harry was the first to leave his bed. When he had closed the window, he stood looking out a moment, although the room was so cold that he shivered.

The sun was brilliant on the snow, the icicles hanging from the eaves were twinkling crystals, the smoke from the chimneys of the buildings curled up toward a serene sky ; but to Harry all this blithesome aspect had the indifference of utter cruelty. It would have been more befitting if the day had come in tempest and in gloom.

Then, as he turned to dress, there was a knock on the door.

"Come in!" cried Harry. The door opened, and Mr. Eldredge stood before him with a face so radiant that the boy's heart leaped up.

"I thought you'd like to know," said the master. "Rupert rallied splendidly early this morning. He's grown stronger, and it looks now as if the danger-point was past."

"Oh!" cried Harry. He turned. "Did you hear, Frank? Did you hear? Wake up! Get up! O Frank, isn't it great! Did you hear?"

He dragged his roommate out of bed; and Mr. Eldredge left them to their own rejoicing.

When they had finished their mad, hilarious dressing, Harry stood again for a moment looking out of the window, down toward the infirmary. And now there seemed no cruelty in the gay sunlight, the flashing splendor of ice and snow, the tranquil stillness. All this was revealed to Harry now as part of the happiness of this day. And it was a gentle, friendly earth

and air and sky that showed and shared such happiness. No gayest holiday in all the year had filled the school with so much joy as this bright day in March.

After breakfast, as Harry and half a dozen others were on their way to the infirmary to get an official report, they met Doctor Vincent leaving the building. The doctor's face was pale and haggard, for he had not slept at all during two nights and a day, and he walked unsteadily; his tired eyes could not bear the light reflected from the snow. But when the boys came near and he recognized them, he laughed and flung up one hand and cried, "It's all right now, fellows; he's pulled through. But I tell you, it was the closest call!"

He passed on up the road.

"He's feeling about as good as any one, for all he looks so done up," said Joe Herrick.

"It must be fine," sighed Harry, "to be a doctor and know you've pulled a fellow through."

"Finest thing in the world," declared Frank

Windsor, who looked forward to doing just that some day.

In chapel that morning the rector read the one hundred and third Psalm, the psalm in which are verses that are spoken above the dead, the psalm in which are other verses of rejoicing for the living. The boys who had heard his quivering voice when he made the announcement in the schoolroom the night before caught now the exultation and the fervor with which he read the words, and in the same spirit made the responses.

After that they all knelt; and in place of the gloomy prayer for the desperately sick, with its clause of resignation to a grievous outcome, the rector read the thanksgiving on behalf of those who have been brought back from the valley of death. And the murmuring, slumberous "Amen!" of the boys rose to the Gothic arches and died whispering away.

Rupert's return to health was slow. It was not until a few days before the beginning of the Easter vacation that his friends were ad-

mitted to see him, and then it was for only a few brief moments.

Harry had hardly more than a glimpse of a frail and emaciated face with big, listless eyes and a smile so wan that it was almost sadder than tears. He left the room feeling oppressed with a sense that there could never be the old, strong Rupert again.

He saw him but twice before going away for the Easter holidays. When he returned after the two weeks' absence, he learned to his sorrow that Rupert had gone. Rupert had improved so much that it had been thought safe to move him; and his mother had taken him South in the hope that there he might regain his health more rapidly.

"And won't he come back to the school at all, sir?" Harry asked the rector, who had given him this information.

"I'm afraid he won't," the rector replied. "You see, he's missed nearly a whole term now, and he will find it impossible to regain his standing with the form. He won't be well and strong for a good while yet."

To Harry the news was a sad disappointment. The intimacy which had grown so dear to him seemed now forever brought to an end. He and Rupert were going to different colleges, their homes were in cities far apart; it was unlikely that their paths would ever cross in after life. The parting from friends was the inevitable sorrow which the close of school life would bring; but this premature separation from the best beloved of all, this sudden breaking off of an intimacy that had already been cruelly interrupted, seemed to Harry very hard to bear.

Francis Stoddard was equally depressed, but he surprised Harry after the first day or two of gloom by urging the duty of cheerfulness.

"I tell you," he declared to Harry and Herrick, on a stormy afternoon, when they sat together over a "brew" of chocolate, "we ought to be so thankful his life was spared that we should never be sad again. That's enough in itself to make us happy, and I'm going to be as happy as I can."

"That's the way to talk," said Herrick.

“Besides, he won't be having a bad time taking it easy down South, and missing all this beastly weather. Francis, let me see if I can still pick out ‘The Blue Danube.’”

He reached for Stoddard's banjo and began thumbing the strings.

“O great Scott!” said Harry. “Just when we were trying to be as happy as we can! Take it from him, Francis, for goodness' sake!”

Perhaps even if they had not determined to show such a brave spirit, they could not long have remained melancholy. For this was the happy term, the one most crowded with activity, the one in which the sentiment of those who were so soon to leave ripened to its sweetest, and made them more than ever before responsive to all that was kind and gentle in the life, all that was beautiful in the place.

Spring was the time, too, of the flowering forth of sports as well as of woods and fields. Canoes were launched in the ponds, “scrub” baseball games were played on the rough meadow behind the upper school long before the playground was in condition, the crews had

their first practice in their shells — the whole school seemed more than ever active and alive.

Herrick was rowing on one of the crews, but Harry had been dropped from the squad entirely. He turned at first to scrub baseball, hoping to develop in that enough skill to win a place later on the Corinthian team. But he nearly always struck out when he tried to bat, and he soon realized that the ball-field was not one that he could adorn.

Then he began training for the half-mile run. He had pretty good "wind," and he was confident that if he worked hard he would be chosen to compete in the June sports.

Indeed, a sort of fear was urging him on now in these efforts, a feeling that he must succeed in order not to be ridiculous. At this season of the year, when other boys were performing exploits on pond or field, his own athletic prowess at football seemed very small and remote; and if he was to stand up as president of the athletic association and feel really comfortable, he must take some part in the athletics of this term.

Two weeks before the annual field-day he was awarded his place on the Corinthian track team. His uneasiness was set at rest. Even though he knew that in the half-mile event Sam Morse would surely beat him, he was content.

He had had several letters in the weeks since Easter from Rupert—letters in which even the handwriting seemed to indicate the progress back toward health.

“I'm coming North pretty soon now,” Rupert had written in the last of these. “Maybe I'll be allowed to make you a visit some time before the end of the term. It would be fine to see all you fellows again.”

Harry had shown the letter to every one in the sixth form, and had got up a “round robin” reply to it, urging Rupert to come.

It was not difficult to secure the signatures; and indeed there was in all matters a more harmonious spirit in the school this term than there had been before. In the dissolution of the Crown the barriers that had separated factions were swept away. There had grown up a

freer and more genial intercourse when the assumption by a few of a secret and important interest was discontinued. And Harry's leadership in school affairs was not more disputed and was far less resented than when he had relied for it upon the support of his "machine." It had never been more enthusiastically followed than in the framing of this letter to Rupert.

The day when Harry learned that his position on the Corinthian track team was secure was crowded for him with pleasurable excitement. He received that afternoon a telegram from his brother Clark, announcing his arrival at San Francisco. Clark and Archer Sands were entering upon the last stage of their journey round the world. They would both be present on the field-day.

Only a few hours after Harry had received the telegram, he met the rector walking down to the athletic field. He touched his cap and was passing, but the rector stopped.

"Harry," he said, "I understand you're to have charge of the exercises on field-day.

Do you think" — his eyes twinkled — "you're up to introducing the President of the United States to an audience?"

"He's coming?" Harry cried.

"Yes, he's coming," answered the rector. "We shall expect you to put him at his ease before the audience."

He laughed in his merry, noiseless way at his little joke, laid a gentle hand on Harry's shoulder for a moment, and then walked on.

Harry hastened exultantly to his room and wrote a letter to his mother, in which he gave her the accumulation of good news. "And now you must be sure to come up to the school for that day," he wrote. "It would spoil it all for me if you did n't come. Besides, just think, it may be your only chance to see one of your sons standing up with the President of the United States."

He did not communicate the news to his mother alone. When he had anything interesting in his mind, he was lavish in sharing it; and before nightfall every boy in the school knew that the President was really coming to

be the rector's guest, and make a speech on field-day.

All the fellows who had gone in for track athletics were tremendously elated. If they could only win a prize, how near they would be to the President when they came up to receive it—within three or four feet of him, maybe! And all the fellows who had gone in for baseball and rowing felt correspondingly chagrined. There would be no chance for them.

But it was Harry whose position seemed to them all most enviable.

“You'll meet him—stand right up and talk to him!” Bruce Watson made the discovery at supper that night. “Oh, what a cinch!”

Harry was so frankly joyous over his opportunity that no one could feel very resentful about it, and the teasing he received concerning his chances for a diplomatic appointment or a place in the Cabinet was all good-natured.

He lost no time in setting about the prepara-

tion of his speech. It must necessarily be short, but he wished the phrasing of it to be exactly right. He came down to dinner one day satisfied in mind. He felt that he had hit upon the best possible introduction.

Tom Eastman, who sat next to him and who was captain of the Pythian track team, was tearing open a letter. After a moment he looked up.

“The President’s not the only fellow who’s coming on for field-day,” he said, with exultation.

“Who else?” Harry asked.

“Rupert Ormsby.” All the boys at the table broke out in eager exclamation and inquiry. “Yes, I’ll read you what he says — if you’ll only keep still. ‘I hope the Pythians are showing their speed on the track this year. The doctor has said I may come on for field-day, and I want to see the Pythians win the way they used to. Love to Harry Harding and Stoddard and Herrick, and all the rest.’ Just a scrap of a note — but is n’t it great!”

There was enthusiastic agreement upon this,

and the news that Rupert was coming circulated through the school as rapidly as that about the President had done, and caused almost as much excitement.

“I wish we could give him a — a demonstration of some kind,” said Frank Windsor, after he had crawled into bed that night.

The remark started Harry to thinking; and while he lay in the darkness, and after Frank's regular breathing had proclaimed he was asleep, a big and generous idea came into Harry's mind. He lay pondering it rather sadly, and at last dropped off to sleep, wondering if he would have courage for it the next morning.

When he awoke he faced it cheerfully, without shrinking. He took Joe Herrick aside after breakfast and whispered with him.

At noon a notice on the bulletin-board attracted a curious throng: —

There will be an important meeting of the athletic association in the auditorium to-morrow at 12.30. Important. All attend.

H. HARDING, President.

Boys came up to Harry at intervals through the day, asking him why the meeting was called, but he gave them all the same mystifying answer — “Wait and see.”

Even Frank Windsor had not been taken into his confidence, and was quite indignant that Harry should make such a secret of what was probably a trivial matter. The mysterious secrecy achieved, however, its purpose in bringing out the next day a full attendance at the meeting. Harry mounted the platform and stood, and when the boys were silent he said: —

“The meeting will please come to order. I will ask Mr. Eldredge to take the chair.”

Thereupon Mr. Eldredge mounted the platform, and Harry descended from it, and standing on the floor said: —

“Mr. Chairman, I called this meeting because I wish to tender my resignation as president. I should like to say a few words in explanation. Rupert Ormsby is coming back here for field-day. Everybody knows Ormsby was the best athlete in the school. He ought

by rights to have been elected president in the first place. And it seems to me maybe we could make up a little of his hard luck to him by electing him now, and having him stand up on field-day as our president. I'm sure it would please him, and I believe all the fellows in the school would like to have him in that position. Mr. Chairman, here's my resignation," — Harry handed a folded paper up to Mr. Eldredge, — "and I hope very much it will be accepted, and my other suggestion adopted."

He sat down, red with the excitement of his speech, and amid a great outburst of applause — applause which was as much perhaps for his generosity as for his idea. When it had subsided, Mr. Eldredge said, with a smile: —

"I take it for granted that you are willing to accept Mr. Harding's resignation. Is there any objection?"

He waited a moment. There was no answer. Then Harry nudged Joe Herrick, who was sitting next to him, and Herrick rose.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "I move that

Mr. Ormsby be elected president by acclamation."

"Second the motion!" cried a dozen voices from all parts of the hall.

"Gentlemen, you have heard the motion. All those in favor say aye!"

There rolled back an overwhelming response.

"Mr. Ormsby is elected. Is there any further business?"

"Mr. Chairman!" Harry was again on his feet and again excited. "I think it would be a good thing if we could make this a surprise to Mr. Ormsby — not notify him beforehand. Let it come to him all unexpected."

"Does the suggestion strike the meeting as a good one?" Mr. Eldredge asked.

"Yes! Yes!" came the answering cries.

"Then the chair earnestly requests that no one transmit to Mr. Ormsby, either by writing or by any other means whatsoever, the news of his election; and the chair appoints Mr. Harding, Mr. Herrick, and Mr. Stoddard a committee of three to wait upon Mr. Ormsby

and inform him of his election at their discretion. If there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned."

The boys slowly dispersed, but a good many of those who knew Harry waited. They had some idea what it had cost him to make this sacrifice, and they wished to say a word which might show their sympathy. But he turned it aside with a laugh.

There had never before been a field-day when so little attention had been given by the spectators to the athletic sports; but that fact in no wise discouraged the contestants. Indeed, they exhibited more than ordinary zeal. This was explained by the two messages which the captains had given their teams at the beginning of the afternoon inside the athletic house.

"Now, fellows, just one thing," said Jim Tilden, captain of the Corinthians. "Remember—the President of the United States is out there to look at you."

Tom Eastman, the captain of the Pythians,

heard the speech. "Now, fellows, just one thing," he said, with quick defiance in his voice, and Corinthians as well as Pythians paused to listen. "Remember — Rupert Ormsby is out there to look at you."

And because of these two facts the eyes of the school and of the visitors were turned away much of the time from the young athletes, who were running and jumping and putting the shot.

Most of them gazed at the gentleman in the silk hat who sat next to the rector in the middle of the stand. But although he held the attention of so many, there was always a little gathering about an open carriage which was drawn up close to the track, and in which sat a boy, pale and thin, yet with a happy eagerness shining in his blue eyes.

Harry finished fourth in the half-mile run. He had hoped to do better than that, but when it was all over he did not feel very much disappointed. He dressed as quickly as he could, and hurried out to join his mother and Clark. They were sitting not very far from the Presi-

dent. And Philip Ward, who also had come on for the field-day, was sitting there too, next to his old roommate.

“It’s much worse than a three-ring circus,” Harry said to his mother. “I want to look at you and Clark, and I want to look at the President, and I want to be with Rupert Ormsby up there in the carriage, and I want to see the sports. They’re mighty close, but the Pythians are sure to win now. They’re better in these last two events than we are. I shan’t mind so much, because it will please Rupert. Clark,” — he nudged his brother, — “I want you to come with me and meet Rupert Ormsby. We’ll be back in a little while, mother.”

As they walked up in front of the stand, it made Harry proud to be aware that in spite of the other attractions some of the boys were noticing his big, handsome brother, and saying, “See that fellow with Harry? That must be Clark Harding.” Indeed, he was as proud of Clark as if he himself had been the older brother, and had brought him up.

“Pretty near time for you to do your presi-

dential act, Harry," Clark said, as they walked along.

"No, not to-day," Harry answered.

Clark glanced at him with a puzzled inquiry in his eyes, but Harry did not explain. And the next moment they were at the carriage, and Rupert Ormsby and Clark Harding were shaking hands. Joe Herrick and Francis Stoddard and the other boys who had been hanging round the carriage modestly withdrew. Harry took Herrick and Stoddard to one side, and whispered with them while his brother and Rupert talked.

A pistol-shot sounded across the field, and five white-clad figures leaped forward in the start of the mile run, the last race on the programme.

"I think we'd better tell him now," said Harry.

With grave faces the committee of three returned to the carriage. They stood by, waiting until the runners had passed on the first lap. Then Harry spoke.

"Rupert," he said, "we three have been



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THE RECTOR AWAITED THEM

appointed a committee to tell you that you are expected, as president of the athletic association, to stand up in a few minutes and do your duty."

Rupert and Clark both looked at him in astonishment.

"What do you mean?" asked Rupert.

"That's right, Rupe!" Stoddard broke in excitedly. "Harry resigned the presidency a little while ago, and you were unanimously elected."

"We knew you were the only real athlete in the school, even if you were sick," Herrick added.

Rupert looked from one to another. A faint flush of color had come into his pale cheeks.

"This is your doing, Harry," he said at last, with a tremor of reproach and gratitude in his voice. "You ought not to have done it, old man. You ought not to have done it."

"He ought," said Clark Harding abruptly. His voice was gruff, and the grip that he fastened on his brother's arm was hard, yet Harry knew there was tenderness in both.

“You'd better be thinking up what to say, Rupe,” Harry warned him. “They'll be wanting you after this race.”

The Pythians had already won the championship, no matter what might be the result of the mile run. Yet when the five came down the home-stretch with only a few yards separating them, there seemed as much excitement among the spectators as if the event were to be decisive. The boys were crowded about the finish line and along up the track, shouting the names of their favorites — “Eastman! Eastman!” “Hall! Hall!” And in the stand the spectators were on their feet, waving flags and hats — the President among them.

“Eastman got it!” Harry announced from the step of the carriage to which he had climbed. “One more score for you fellows, Rupert. Now you'd better let me help you down. The rector will be looking for you.”

“Oh, I'm not so feeble as all that,” said Rupert, and he scorned the proffered hands that were outstretched to aid him. He clambered down to the ground alone.

Yet he was rather rickety and walked slowly, and submitted after a moment to having Harry take his arm and steer him through the crowd. At the foot of the grand stand was the rector, awaiting them. He took Rupert from Harry's charge and led him up the steps. And Harry, returning to where his mother sat with Philip Ward, saw Rupert with his hat off, shaking hands with the President. At that sight a lump of disappointment rose in Harry's throat. Perhaps his mother knew how he felt, for she pressed his hand without looking at him, and he swallowed the lump.

Rupert and the President and the rector's little daughter, who was to hand out the prizes, walked together across the track to the table, on which were the shining mugs and medals. The President walked in the middle, arm in arm with each of the others.

"That's to steady Rupert," Harry murmured to his mother. "Is n't it nice of him?"

The crowd became very still and expectant. Standing by the table, with her hands folded

in front of her, the little girl looked wonderingly up at the President, who gazed straight ahead with a faint smile.

Rupert took a step forward. He did not look like a great athlete. His clothes hung loose upon his shrunken figure, his face was pale, and as he spoke his voice was thin and rather tremulous.

“Ladies and gentlemen, and boys of St. Timothy's School,” he said, “I have the great honor of presenting to you the President of the United States.”

The applause lasted only a moment. Every one was too eager to hear the President speak. He turned first to Rupert.

“Mr. President,” he said, and bowed, “ladies and gentlemen, and boys. I was very much impressed this afternoon with a little story that your rector told me while I was looking on at your sports. It was the story of a boy who might, if all had gone well, have been a leader in these sports, — a boy who was perhaps the best athlete in this school, which has, as I have seen to-day, so many athletes, — but a boy who

by a series of misfortunes had been obliged to leave in the middle of the year with all his school ambitions unattained, all his promised achievements unfulfilled. Yet he had left behind so dear a name that when, still an invalid, he was able to revisit the school, he found bestowed upon him the highest honor for that brief period that the school could give. I am glad to be among boys who do not forget true worth; and I am glad to stand beside the boy whose worth they have not forgotten."

Then from the stand, from up and down the track, upon which people had crowded in their eagerness to hear and see, came a great outburst of applause, during which Rupert stood looking at the ground, while the President's hand rested lightly on his shoulder. When at last the cheering ceased, the President continued: —

"But this is not all of the story that the rector told me. There was another boy who had been elected to this honorable office. And it was his unselfish thought, — a thought none the less unselfish because it was prompted by

a sense of justice, — it was his renunciation and sacrifice, that gave the school its opportunity to show the returning comrade how well he was remembered. And I think it is only fair that I should have the chance of standing beside that boy, too, — of standing between the two presidents of your athletic association. If that boy is anywhere round, will he please step out and show himself? ”

There was laughter and applause and turning of heads. Even Rupert dared now to look up at the stand with a shy, expectant smile.

Harry Harding was being hustled down the aisle.

“Get out there! Get out there!” his brother had cried to him, thrusting him forward, jamming him through the throng. And as he came, every one along the way gave a hand in helping him forward. In a moment, hatless, red, disheveled, he bounded out on the track and stepped up beside the President.

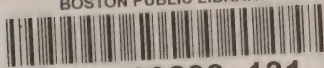
“Are you Harry Harding?” asked the President, in a stern and forbidding voice.

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

Then the President placed his left hand on Harry's shoulder, his right on Rupert's, and looked again up at the stand, with laughter twitching at his lips.

"With these two fellows holding up my hands," he said, "I could feel perfectly safe."

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